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Montauk

Max Frisch

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Max Frisch

A love story, tender and tenuous, serves to illuminate a lifetime of attachments. Max Frisch, Swiss novelist and playwright, reveals himself as a man, loving, jealous, possessive, and possessed. Rather than veiling personal experience in the trappings of fiction, he writes of it as though he were "telling a tale," casting himself as both subject and observer.

The present moment shows him on a weekend tryst with a thirty-year-old divorcee at Gurney's Inn in Montauk Point, Long Island. It is a rendezvous that by prearrangement will have no aftermath. In this meeting between a young American and an aging European, memory is released, partly by her questions, but also by his own need to make peace with his life. The writer, under shock from a painful revelation, considers himself as a human being—lover, husband, father, friend—and his "potency" as both a man and a writer. He resolutely faces his past and his relentlessly diminishing future. He sees that in the long view a friendship may be as affecting as love, and that love always requires the readiness to relinquish. So uncompromisingly personal is this document that the reader listens for his own inner response to the writer's voice, and the experience of reading becomes a dialogue of absorbing intensity.

Translated by Geoffrey Skelton

Max Frisch was born in Zurich, Switzerland, the son of an architect. After an interlude as a journalist, caused by economic circumstance, he was able to resume his studies and became an architect himself. He continued writing, however, and made his mark internationally with his novel *I'm Not Stiller*, which was followed by *Homo Faber* and then *Sketchbook 1966-1971*, a combination of reflections, recollections, and short stories. Max Frisch is the author, also, of frequently performed plays, among them the widely discussed *Andorra* and *The Firebugs*.

Reviews of *Montauk*

"*Montauk* goes beyond anything so far known to us by Frisch. It is his most intimate and most delicate, his most modest and at the same time boldest, his simplest and perhaps for this reason his most original book. . . . Frisch tells the love stories of his life, from his high-school days to the immediate present. He shows how dependency comes to develop and where it leads. *Montauk* is . . . a book of love by a poet of anxiety."

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

"Rarely has a writer portrayed and analyzed himself so simply and openly as a man, a man loving, jealous, in bondage to women. . . . This is a highly personal story of the hesitant love between an old man and a young woman with, as its canvas, the story of all the narrator's loves."

Die Zeit

Montauk

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MAX FRISCH

Translated by Geoffrey Skelton

A HELEN AND KURT WOLFF BOOK

HARCOURT BRACE JOVANOVICH

NEW YORK AND LONDON

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B C D E

THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN IN GOOD FAITH, READER. IT WARNS YOU FROM THE OUTSET THAT IN IT I HAVE SET MYSELF NO GOAL BUT A DOMESTIC AND PRIVATE ONE. . . . I HAVE DEDICATED IT TO THE PRIVATE CONVENIENCE OF MY RELATIVES AND FRIENDS, SO THAT WHEN THEY HAVE LOST ME (AS SOON THEY MUST), THEY MAY RECOVER HERE SOME FEATURES OF MY HABITS AND TEMPERAMENT . . . FOR IT IS MYSELF THAT I PORTRAY. MY DEFECTS WILL HERE BE READ TO THE LIFE, AND ALSO MY NATURAL FORM, AS FAR AS RESPECT FOR THE PUBLIC HAS ALLOWED. . . . THUS, READER, I AM MYSELF THE MATTER OF MY BOOK; YOU WOULD BE UNREASONABLE TO SPEND YOUR LEISURE ON SO FRIVOLOUS AND VAIN A SUBJECT. / SO FAREWELL. MONTAIGNE, THIS FIRST DAY OF MARCH, FIFTEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The few slight divergences from the original text in this translation have been made either at the author's instigation or with his consent.

Montauk

A sign promising a view across the island: OVERLOOK. It was he who suggested stopping here. A parking lot for at least a hundred cars, at the moment empty; their car is the only one standing in the grids painted on the asphalt. It is morning. Sunny. Shrubs and bushes around the empty parking lot; so no view here, but there is a path leading off through the shrubs which, they decide, will take them to the viewing point. Then she goes back to the car, and he waits. They have plenty of time: a whole weekend. He stands there not really knowing what he is thinking at the moment . . . In Berlin it is now three in the afternoon . . . He does not usually like waiting, but she has suddenly realized she does not really need her purse just to look at the Atlantic. Everything seems to him a bit improbable, but after a while he begins to accept the simple reality: a rustling in the bushes, her jeans (a pale washed-out blue), her feet on the path, her reddish hair through the twigs and branches. Her return to the car was worthwhile: YOUR PIPE. Then she walks on ahead, ducking here and there beneath the tangle of branches, and he ducks down under the same branches when she is already walking upright again: the figure of a strange young woman. It is still undergrowth in which they are walking. The overgrown path is only a path of sorts, not always clearly recognizable. At the outset he had gone first—in his role as a man, since neither of them knows the way around here. At one point, a swampy ditch over which he had to help her. Since then she has been walking in front, and he prefers it that way. It makes her happy, as he can see from the lightness and springiness of her step. The Atlantic cannot be far

away. High above, one solitary seagull. As he walks, he fills his pipe and marvels, not asking himself what he is marveling at. Now and again he catches the scent of flowers, but he has no idea what they are, the plants here are unfamiliar. He has assured her that he can find the car again quite easily, and she seems to trust him. To light his pipe he has to stop briefly; it is windy, and it takes five matches. In the meantime she walks on, so for a few moments he loses sight of her; moments in which this walk with a young woman seems to him like a fantasy or a distant memory. In fact, there are now a lot of paths, or what look like paths, and so she has stopped: Which way? The map he bought yesterday is still in the car; it would not help much anyway in this territory. They just follow the sun. It is no path for conversations. In places where the undergrowth thins, the surrounding countryside can be seen: it does not look strange to him, though he has never been here before. It is not Greece—different vegetation entirely. All the same, he thinks of Greece, then again of the island of Sylt. He wishes there did not always have to be memories. They have been walking for half an hour. They want to see the Atlantic. They have nothing else to do, they have plenty of time. It is also not Brittany, where he was last at the seaside, a year ago. The same sea air. Maybe he is even wearing the same shirt, the same shoes, all of them a year older. He knows where they are:

MONTAUK

an Indian name, applied to the northern point of Long Island, one hundred and twenty miles from Manhattan. He could also name the date:

5/11/74

There are not only branches hanging over the path, causing them to duck; there are also withered ones lying here and there on

the ground, and she has to hop over them. She is very slim, but not bony. Her blue jeans are rolled up over her calves; her bottom looks small beneath the tight pants, which she is wearing without a belt, and there is a comb stuck in the side pocket. She is neither taller nor shorter than he, but lightly built. Her hair, when she wears it loose, reaches down to her hips, but now she has it tied up, a red ponytail which swings as she walks. Since he has to watch the path (if you can call it that) and also keep an eye open for the best way of getting out of this tangled undergrowth, he sees her figure only from time to time; her blouse bright in the sunshine, which makes her hair look fair too. Frequently it is a tossup which way to go—no path. Sometimes she takes a huge step to get up on a rock or a tree stump; her legs are long, but the step is too large, and to raise herself she has to make an effort. That she would do too if she were alone: toss her head sharply to throw the ponytail back over her shoulder. The prospect of reaching the coast seems ever more unlikely, but still they keep going. Then for a while it looks as if she is walking along a rope, putting one foot before the other like a tightrope walker, her shoulders bending pliantly to adjust the balance. Still no sign of sand dunes; not a gull now in the sky. She stops to roll up the sleeves of her blouse; down here in the hollow it is hot—no sea breeze. Now they are standing side by side: a peculiar sense of present togetherness. He notices that he has both hands in his pockets, a cold pipe in his mouth. Her face: he has not forgotten it, but with those huge sunglasses she is wearing he cannot see her eyes. Her lips during the daytime are narrow, often mocking.

HOW DID I ENCOURAGE YOU?

Her question—not now, but yesterday on the journey here. Obviously she is as astonished as he that he is here now, standing beside her.

His flight is booked for Tuesday.

At first I thought she was just the camera girl usual on such occasions, suddenly crouching down and clicking, telling one how to sit and then, just as one has at last forgotten her, clicking again, once, twice, three times, four times. But she had no camera. She just sat there in silence, not interrupting, as a man from some wretched newspaper questioned me for a full hour. HAVE YOU BEEN IN THIS COUNTRY BEFORE? etc. A personal interview. ARE YOU MARRIED? WHERE IN EUROPE ARE YOU LIVING? DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN? etc. So now she knew it all too, this young woman. At one stage she picked up the telephone, since she happened to be sitting next to it, and dealt efficiently with the inquiry. I thanked her. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO WRITE NEXT, PLAY OR NOVEL OR ANOTHER DIARY? My spirits rose, for this is always the last question, or at least the last but one. I tell the American public in my unpracticed English that life is boring, that I have experiences now only when I am writing. It was not meant as a joke, but all the same he laughed. She did not. When later I was helping her into her shaggy white jacket I once more, out of courtesy, asked her name. LYNN, she said, as if the first name was all I needed to know. Her long flowing hair got in the way as she put on the jacket, but I could not assist her—that hair was not for my hand to touch. One last question: DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF A DOOMED MAN? Afterward I saw that she had left her cigarettes behind, and her lighter. It remained there under the lamp for two weeks, a cheap green lighter.

What am I really doing over here?

One can go out without an overcoat; a snowstorm on arrival, but shortly afterward it was spring again . . . The women's prison on

the corner, a tall block of brown brick, has been demolished; it is now a sandy square, surrounded by wire netting. Pigeons are cooing in the hedges, but they can fly out any time. Otherwise little has changed in two years. The little trees on Ninth Street are still thin and sparse; but their leaves are sprouting. (The courage of chlorophyll!) In the drugstore, where I again take my breakfast, the people serving behind the counter are still the same. The yellow taxis, the gleaming black garbage sacks on the street, the sirens of the red fire engines. In the hotel they recognize me as an old customer: DID YOU HAVE A GOOD TIME? A different room from the last time, two years ago, but furnished exactly the same: low table with marble top on which one can rest one's feet, yellow standing lamps, yellow bed coverings, green wall-to-wall carpet, a sofa the color of manure but not uncomfortable, two armchairs in the same color, the familiar whirring of the air conditioner, which one can, however, turn off. One can also open the two sash windows a bit by pushing up their rotting frames; the panes are always dirty. The parapets in front of these windows are low, and you have to be careful if you want to look down on the crossing below. It is only in dreams you can fly by your own power.

MAY I INTRODUCE YOU?

Then I either miss the name or forget it at once. I stand there and make answers and do not always know whom I have answered. Why does one do it? It must be done (say the publishers) for the sake of the book—

LYNN

I could ring her up on some professional pretext. Dinner perhaps. Now, whenever a woman attracts me, I feel presumptuous.

HUDSON:

Renewing acquaintance with the oily reflections on the water. A few fat gulls on the jetty. An old steamer is still lying at anchor; beards of seaweed on the chains. A solitary helicopter flies past. It is windy, the black water slaps against the jetty, whose beams were already rotten two years ago. A big white freighter, which will presumably sail tomorrow, lies quiet and unmoving: STATENDAM, Dutch flag waving in the wind. Behind me the old highway, at the moment under repair. The dingy little bar where they play billiards is also still there: BLUE RIBBON, the neon sign red as lemonade in the dusk. To the west there is a slimy sunset going on, in front of it a long black freighter. A few people on the jetty, idle strollers like myself. A young black is describing slaloms with a bicycle. A couple entwined on the furthermost plank look like a silhouette. An old man with a dog. Another dog without a master. The long thick hempen hawsers. A beer can begins to roll about in the wind.

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ARTS AND LETTERS:

I rise and express my thanks.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART:

I skip the art and spend the whole morning sitting in the sculpture garden. Maybe art has nothing to say to me when I am alone. I enjoy sitting here under the few trees. I have been coming to sit in this garden (Moore, Picasso, Calder, etc.) for twenty years and more:

1951
1956
1963

1970
1971
1972

Back on my feet, I again have the feeling that my body has grown lighter. It is now quite light, as if the weight of gravity had lessened during my long walk. Everything I admit to myself also seems practicable; I must not just speak, but do.

CENTRAL PARK:

A reliable source has taught me that the famous squirrels are not in fact squirrels, but tree rats. Once there were squirrels here. The tree rats are not reddish like squirrels, but are no less decorative. One can watch them from quite close for minutes at a time, so tame are these tree rats. The main thing that distinguishes them from squirrels is that they destroy squirrels.

WHITE HORSE:

The writer is afraid of feelings that are not suited to publication; he takes refuge then in irony; all he perceives is considered from the point of view of whether it is worth describing, and he dislikes experiences that can never be expressed in words. A professional disease that drives many writers to drink.

SANITATION:

I still awake much too early. Before the daily round begins, people take their dogs, large and small, out into the street, holding tight to the lead as the animals piss or shit. One dog hour in the morning, another in the evening. One must just take care where one walks. They are clearly very dependent on their dogs and puppies, the people here; they have a craving for love and patiently allow

themselves to be dragged from one sniffing post to another, even when it is raining. Only when they come to a red traffic light do they resist being pulled along and put up a fight till the light turns green. A befouled area. Some have more than just one dog. An area full of love cravings. The white truck with the revolving brushes (SANITATION) can never reach it all; bits always remain behind.

LONG DISTANCE:

A woman weeping on the telephone makes me helpless, completely helpless; being unable to grasp her wrist—though that would make no difference anyway.

FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL:

In the day (without the glow of the yellow lamps) the carpet looks blue rather than green. At the moment the sun is on it, a slanting rectangle, but the air on my legs strikes cool. I had been reading and thinking of what I was reading; suddenly this memory of the skin: FRÜHLING, JA, DU BIST'S—namely, through the spring sunshine on this carpet, which I know: I once kissed it. I UNDERSTAND YOU NOW! All of a sudden, reading (FICTION) fails to help against this memory of the skin, which is due above all to the coolness around my legs above the socks. No bird song through the open window, but the traffic noises of a big city, quite specific noises as the buses start up again on the green light at the corner of FIFTH AVENUE and NINTH STREET. Again I place my feet, still in shoes, on the low table and eat nuts from a hollowed hand.

MY GREATEST FEAR: REPETITION

An American girl student studying literature at Yale does not put the usual academic questions. She asks: Does Stiller really want

Julika to be redeemed, or is he really only interested in being her redeemer?

WASHINGTON SQUARE:

Chess players around the stone tables with their weather-resistant chessboard tops, above them green leaves and twittering birds. I often stop there for a long time, but remain standing; I never sit down. Today someone, a black man, asked me if I would like a game. Not much of a player, as I had already noted, yet all the same I did not risk it. Can I not afford defeats? Or even a victory? Because it achieves nothing; on the contrary, afterward the knowledge of my domestic failure still yawns—

15 COMMERCE STREET:

I should never want to live in a place I had once lived in before, not even in this delightful house. One room on each floor. In the basement a perfect kitchen and an eating niche which felt like a cabin, lamplight even by day; what one saw through the little windows was not sea spray, but snow on the sidewalk, the legs of passers-by in snow and slush, the swifter legs of dogs. On the top floor, where I tried to work, the building shook most of all; the rumbling of the heavy trucks with their heavy trailers began long before dawn, and when that left off, because they had to stop for a minute at the traffic lights, there was the other rumbling of the subway. All the same, I had the feeling that the house was quiet; a quietness as if I had been deaf. The soft hum of the refrigerator, one's own footsteps, the crackle as I turned the pages of the newspaper. I could hear mail being pushed through the slit in the door, a key being inserted and turned in the front door. Had I been deaf? I heard what was said to me, and I believed it. A record of genuine sea sounds (to help me stop hearing the traffic) I could also hear; a friendly gift—

We heard Neruda reading.

VIA MARGUTTA:

The warm air has done that, the light: I am suddenly in Rome. Only the architectural background is wrong, of course. No idea what I should be doing in Rome; I am only there for a little while—

GOETHE HOUSE:

A successful man can look like a walrus and women will not only flock to him but even flaunt their charms unbidden, almost without reserve. Only out on the street, anonymous in the crowd, do I feel utterly like a walrus again.

EIGHTH STREET BOOKSHOP:

To be able to stand in a bookstore at midnight . . . I bought the little yellow Langenscheidt: only to see, when looking things up, how my memory lets me down, in almost every case. After all, one did once know:

SENSIBLE / SENSITIVE / SENSUAL

I read in the elevator that Konrad Farner has died in Zurich. I do not miss my floor on that account. Konrad Farner has been spared much. But the circle of dead friends is widening.

OLIVETTI LETTERA

I cannot help it, I have bought a small typewriter, though with no literary intentions. (A story set in Ticino has gone wrong for the

fourth time; the role of the narrator is not yet clear.) This obsession with typing sentences—

PRO MEMORIA

A French nobleman on the way to the guillotine once asked for pen and paper to write something down. His request was granted: one could always destroy what he had written if it were addressed to anybody. But it was not. It was a note entirely for himself: pro memoria.

What I have to do in New York would still have to be done even in Zurich or Berlin. In Berzona (Ticino) it has already been done, I think. In Rome? Then again I do not really know what has to be done; pollution of the surroundings through feelings no longer fit for use, gone rotten because I have never expressed them, or not honestly enough, have not consciously put them behind me. It is high time I did. I dreamed the night before last that I was to be executed on Wednesday, and I could not understand why it should be next Wednesday: I am in good health. This arbitrary decision by an authority that does not know what it is about—an authority, incidentally, without an address; there is no chance of an appeal.

Another dream:

People are whispering. Who? My father's coffin has burst open, they say. I did not know that, but I understand. Confinement can drive one insane. They give me something sweet to eat, as one does to comfort a child. Passers-by. I suddenly cannot see why I should lie down in the coffin. They have already got into a sort of barge, all of them dressed in black, and there they stand now in this barge with long oars. Lake Zurich. Nobody tries to stop me as I

run away, find on the jetty a long rescue pole which can be used in a pinch as an oar; only it is laborious, for the pole has no blade. Still, I will show them. I cannot remember what I was standing on; a sort of raft, a board? I stand on it and row along after them. Someone has told me where they are going. When I at last catch up with them, row along beside them, they do not speak to me. I can hear what they are saying. You don't need to whisper! And they are not whispering either. He will burst his lungs, they say. No doubt in their minds that I am done for. And now he has to go rowing! They had assumed that I would take it more easily, that I would make no fuss, would not put up a resistance. It makes no difference: we are rowing to my funeral. But I don't see why: I am, as they can see, still able to row. Now they are no longer talking to me; they are in a hurry.

TRATTORIA DA ALFREDO

I admit that I did not discover this trattoria just by chance; I went out to look for it, as if there were some feeling there to be called for: A CAUSE D'UNE FEMME. Not wishing to be recognized, I stopped only long enough to light a pipe; a passer-by with nothing particular in mind. A feeling of shame to be standing here two years later, waiting for a green light. Incidentally, I saw the little trattoria only from the outside, chairs upturned on the little tables. For it was early morning. To see inside one would have had to put one's face close to the reflecting windowpane, using both hands as blinkers to see through the reflection. That I did not do. It was a shock when I saw my figure in the glass. But once it was green again, I knew: a natural occurrence. I hadn't, after all, fired any shots. All the same, I had now forgotten where I had been meaning to go, but I kept on walking. Without a coat. It was cool, springtime, as it had been then, a clear blue morning with a wind from the sea. As I walked along I read every advertisement closely, though there were other things I might have done.

She cannot stand this sentence. A quotation. She calls it kitsch. What is this truth anyway that Man is supposed to be able to face? We quarreled about what kitsch was.

MY LIFE AS A MAN:

The title of a new book which Philip Roth brought yesterday to my hotel. Why should I shrink so from the same title in German: MEIN LEBEN ALS MANN? I should like to know what I, writing under artistic discipline, would find out about my life as a man.

GIACOMETTI:

His exhibition in this impossible museum with its spiral staircase; opening night with a thousand tuxedos and ladies in long gowns; above it all his blown-up photographic portrait. And what a face! . . . What is it (or who is it) that gives a person class? Achievement is partly responsible. Is it something one gives oneself? Even in failure one can have class. For what reason? Class has nothing to do with fame. I know people who have lost their fame while still living; they still have class. Class is not the hallmark of victory. How, then, does it manifest itself? I have met people of class, men and women, famous and otherwise, though I have never met Giacometti. Contact with people of class (they do not have to be working in the same field) provides encouragement in a singular way. The encouragement does not come from their praise; they bestow class, whether they agree or disagree; in their expectation of class they are always ready to make yet another effort. This expectation can of course be disappointed. In people of class the expectation of class is not a random one, but it has nothing to do with success or lack of success; they set the standards themselves.

By this they can be recognized more unerringly than by their actual achievements, which the other person is in many cases not competent to judge. Their class gives their achievements distinction. They are not always friendly; but they do not lose faith when someone occasionally falls short of his class. They will listen sympathetically to the self-doubts which are put before them, but they do not allow themselves to be deceived by self-accusations, like others who, if not immediately dazzled by a grand manner, involuntarily reduce their expectations and become indulgent in a manner that sets everything down a peg, absolutely everything.

ERINYES

They do not tear you apart, they just stand there, on some corner or other: here, up on the third floor, you once lived, WAVERLY PLACE / CHRISTOPHER STREET, twenty-three years ago. As if I didn't know! I do not even glance up at the house front, I just note that the shop on the ground floor is now different; it used to be a food store, a lousy one; I had two hundred dollars a month, the apartment cost one hundred dollars a month. Once a flowerpot fell off my window sill, but it hit nobody.

Where will the Erinyes get me?

Recently we found a term for it: attacks. Always unpleasant for her, I know, and completely incomprehensible. She is in no physical danger; if she fears that, she is wrong; not the slightest tendency in that direction. If there were violence, it would be against myself: a form of self-expression. I imagine I am showing understanding, thought, awareness, though admittedly making no allowances—at the start quite calm, though making no allowances for either myself or anyone else. I do not shout, at any rate not at the beginning. I cannot, it is true, be reached by words, even if I continue for a while to listen. The truth I am trying to express,

the truth that in this moment I recognize, is seldom a self-exoneration. An attack may be set off by trivialities, things too ridiculous even to mention, but I see them as signs, and therefore by no means trivial. These signs are so clear to me that I can scarcely bear any other explanation, least of all an innocuous one. No accusations—no, I am seeking only to get things clear in my mind. So it seems to me, and in these moments I have no fear at all of the consequences, of which I am quite aware. My speech (monologue) has a lethal quality; but it does not arise out of hate. What is the other person to do? Simply understand what it is I am unable to put in words; accept it. I cannot bear myself. But I cannot wake up, as one can when one's dreams become too unbearable. As I see things in this moment, thus they are, just this and nothing else, and I am prepared. For what? It is then, I know, that I begin to repeat myself. There is no returning to reason; reasonableness offends me, it humiliates me and it also provokes my anger. Yet I began so calmly; what I had meant was not a reproach, but something more important: THE TRUTH, I mean. If I tear my shirt, it stands for my skin. I plead; it comes out, apparently, sounding quite different. I implore. But everything I say now sounds merely vindictive. And other things simply do not come to mind. At such moments I would give my life to be able to make myself for once understandable—nothing more than that. Afterward I feel sorry about my anger; it could never have untied the Gordian knot. And on top of that I am obliged to apologize.

SWEETS

It is said to be the oldest fish restaurant in the city. A shed in the old marketplace which should have been demolished years ago. Unless you had heard of it, you would never enter it. At midday there is hardly a table to be had: it is full of busy people from WALL STREET. Since getting to know this restaurant I have taken

many friends there. With seafood dishes of every kind they serve an excellent American sauterne, and beneath the highway one can see the glittering EAST RIVER. Lynn had also not known it before. She likes it; it is not at all chic. She has arranged another interview for me; that is her job. With her flowing hair and her spectacles she is a mixture of Undine and nurse. In the summer she is to visit Greece with her parents. No point in my offering her advice: it is a GUIDED TOUR. Since Lynn has read none of my writings, I enjoy for once saying the exact opposite: I am not interested in politics at all. The writer's responsibility to society and all that rubbish: the truth is, I write to express myself. I write for myself. Society, of whatever kind, is not my master, and I am not its priest or even its schoolteacher. The public as a working partner? I can find more reliable partners. So it is not because I feel a duty to teach or convert the public that I publish my things but because, if one is to recognize one's own identity, one needs imaginary readers. Basically, however, I am writing only for myself . . . Lynn does not protest; it sounds more convincing (to me as well) than I had expected.

YOU ARE A RICH MAN, I AM SURE, BUT THIS IS A BUSINESS LUNCH. YOU SHOULDN'T PAY FOR THIS—IT'S JUST SILLY.

Recently (though now it is already years ago) I chanced to see him again from a distance in Zurich (on the Limmatquai); a weighty man now. We had been at school together in Zurich. No idea whether he saw me too; he did not turn around, and I felt guilty because I just remained standing where I was and did not at once go after him. So the last view I had of him was only from the back. Without a hat. Broad shoulders. He is very tall, unmistakable in a crowd, and I had seen him just before from the front. He was looking straight ahead, obviously deep in thought, but then he looked down at the curb, as if he had also recognized me. He knows and I know what he has done for me. I did not even

call out across the street to make him turn. What does W. want with my eternal gratitude? And anyway I know that, all in all, I cannot measure up to him. In class he was always at the top, though he was not a grind. He was more intelligent than the rest of us but could not take his intelligence lightly, so he was conscientious as well. He was always rather embarrassed when the teachers praised him and, unwilling to be regarded as a model pupil, he could at times be very insolent to them. After school I used to walk home with him: it was out of my way, but worth it—from him I first heard about Nietzsche, Oswald Spengler, Schopenhauer. His parents were very rich, but that he considered unimportant, nothing to be self-conscious about. After graduation he could, for instance, have toured the world, but he was as little interested in that idea as in a car of his own. He disliked such superficialities. He had a philosophical bent; I was amazed by all the things he had in his head. He was also very musical, which I am not; he spent whole evenings playing me records of Bach, Mozart, Anton Bruckner, and others whose names I had never even heard; nobody is completely unmusical, he said. I was at that time writing for newspapers, and I felt proud when my little pieces were published; my urge to assert myself was, I believe, the first thing about me that disappointed him. Of course he understood that I had to earn money, but the things I wrote embarrassed him. He encouraged me to draw, since in this direction he thought me not untalented. His feeling for the graphic arts was also unusual, and it was not just the result of reading; it came entirely from his own sensibilities. In spite of his encouragement, however, I had no confidence in my drawing abilities, but I did learn from him what to look for in pictures. In philosophical concepts he was soon so far ahead of me that I could not converse with him on equal terms; he hardly ever mentioned whom he was reading at the time, so it may well be that I credited him personally with things that really belonged to Sigmund Freud. Not that he deliberately deceived me. It was just that he

saw no point in mentioning sources of which at the time I had never even heard. And so he encouraged me to draw. He himself gave up playing the cello, because in spite of all the practice he put in, he could not satisfy his own high standards; his hands were too clumsy. In all sorts of ways W. made life difficult for himself. His parents of course knew that he would never take over the family business, though he did in fact in later years become a director, but only very reluctantly. For a time he studied medicine, then passed his preliminary examinations; I never really understood why he felt obliged to give it up, but it was certainly not for frivolous reasons. Later he started to paint, and I admired what he produced; it was anything but dazzling, but it had an elemental quality. He was an unusual person; no doubt things were more difficult for him than for the rest of us. He was also physically my superior. His parents had a tennis court in their garden and, since I had little money to spare, W. gave me his old rackets so that we could play together. He was not a bit interested in winning; it was simply that he played better, and I was able to learn from him what he himself had learned from a coach, and more: he also taught me to lose, not to play just for points. It didn't matter to him, of course, since he scored all the points anyway, but it was hopeless for me. I enjoyed those hours very much, and when he was obliged sometimes to tell me that the court was too wet to play on, I was unhappy. I dreamed of W. When I visited him, a maidservant would open the door and politely ask me to wait in the hall until she had inquired inside, and then of course I had the feeling that I was intruding, even if W. did not send me away. W. seldom called on me, but if I did not call on him for weeks at a time, he was surprised. He was a warm-hearted friend, in fact my only friend at that time, for beside him anyone else seemed unthinkable; no one could ever have measured up to W. His parents, who viewed him with some concern, were always very friendly to me; when W. asked them whether I might stay for supper, they always said yes. It was, incidentally, the first

rich family I ever came to know, and nicer than others I have known since. On the whole I felt rewarded. It was more difficult when I wanted to give things to W.—for his birthday or at Christmas. He was always touched, but embarrassed, for his taste was better developed than mine, and things had often to be returned for exchange. At that time I had my first girl, and of course I could not exchange her. She was afraid of W., I believe, and unwilling to recognize his superiority, which grieved me. This was forty years ago. I often asked myself what W. got from me. We walked a lot; we went swimming together. He also had an extremely sensitive eye for the beauties of nature. Mechanical things—overhead cables and so on—offended him almost physically. Through him I came to appreciate Caspar David Friedrich, Corot, later Picasso and African masks, but he was never at all pedantic about it. Much of what he knew he kept to himself. I had walked all over Greece, and of course I told him about it, but when I did so, I had the feeling that W. would have seen more. It was a feeling that he himself, I think, shared; he would listen, but then could not resist interrupting me to point out something worth seeing that I should certainly not have seen but for him, something of immediate interest, an unusual moth, for instance. He simply saw more. There was only one thing for which I was never grateful: his suits, which were a size too large for me. My mother could of course shorten the sleeves, the trousers too; but all the same, they never really fitted me. I wore them only in order not to offend W.; he meant it well, knew that I could not afford suits of my own, and the material, when he passed on a coat or a jacket to me, was always still in perfect condition. Why he did not continue wearing the things himself was none of my business. He was in no way a fop or a slave to fashion. But his parents had a tailor who, I think, came to the house from time to time. And anyway, he gave me other things which he had not worn himself—gramophone records, for instance, a whole symphony. He never gave presents blindly, as the newly rich tend to

do; the gift was never irrational or extravagant for my circumstances. He had an inkling, without my ever having to tell him, of how little a young reporter and reviewer earns. He had sensitivity enough, he was indeed embarrassed on my behalf by the luxury of his home—quite unnecessarily, in fact, for I never identified W. with luxury. He seemed to me, in his room with a view over the garden, the city, and the lake, more like a Diogenes—his rarefied spirit giving him independence. He rode on streetcars like anybody else. In all things he never chose the easy way; he was always hard on himself. In October, when the water is cold, he would swim across the lake and back. Later, W. paid for my whole course of studies: sixteen thousand francs (worth more then than now) spread over four years, which is to say four thousand francs a year. Actually I am sorry I have even mentioned the suits. I was not annoyed when suddenly, in the middle of a conversation, he would recognize his own jacket again and remark how well English materials wear and it was a pity and so on; I found it rather comic—nothing more. For a long while he kept inviting me to concerts, and not only at the last moment because his mother couldn't use the tickets. He really did believe that no one could be unmusical through and through, and indeed I often was thrilled—in a low-brow sort of way, as I could see from his face; at such times W. was silent—not supercilious, just embarrassed. All the same, he continued inviting me to concerts, but never to the theater. He was by no means blind to the theater, but his attitude was more critical than mine. Altogether he was more critical than I was, even toward himself. I often found him in a state of genuine despair. He was a person who could not take things lightly—himself least of all. His despair was not hysterical. He could describe clearly and sensibly the problems he found insoluble. Anything I could then say to him would only emphasize how much alone he was. The worries of an ordinary mortal—like, for example, my worries over a Jewish fiancée during the thirties—could not be compared with his; even

I could feel that. His troubles were exemplary, mine merely personal, and these were capable of solution, in various ways which he confided to me. Not that W. lacked sympathy; but there was no one who could help him with his own concerns, certainly not his father, a kind but sober man, or his mother, who regarded herself as an intellectual and whose cultural wanderlust he saw as escapism. Many years later, when we had not seen each other for a long time (I had been spending a year in America), I told him of my impending divorce. W. asked no questions, but his silence was enough to show me how self-righteously I had depicted the matter to him. We were tramping through woods, and W. tried to talk of something else, but in that moment I had no eye for moths. To stay on the subject of my divorce, I asked him about his own marriage. Although I had long been familiar with the story he unfolded, what he now told me was more to the point, richer in complications, and its deeper insights could not be applied to my own particular case. It would have been more than tasteless if I had attempted to bring the subject back to my own difficulties. His divorce permitted no comparisons. All the same, I did eventually get divorced. At the time I did not notice that during these years we were almost always alone together, never among a group, which would have enabled me to see my friend pitting himself against others. This was due as much to myself as to him, although he did indeed dislike social occasions. I did not suffer from the sense of his superiority as long as we were alone; I was used to it. As I said, I felt rewarded, singled out, as in the days when I was permitted to walk home from school with him. He gave me the Engadine. Even today I cannot drive through that area without thinking of W. And I do not just mean that otherwise a journey to the Engadine would have been beyond my means. He knew the Engadine intimately. He was also the better climber. His family had a mountain guide who had given him instruction year after year. Without W. I should never have climbed those mountains. He knew when and where there was a danger

of avalanches and how to negotiate a tricky stretch of territory; he tied the red avalanche thread to his rucksack, inspected the slope carefully, tested the snow, then swept off down the valley on his skis, and all I had to do was to follow in his bold tracks as best I could. Once, when I broke a ski in a heavy fall, W. bought me a new pair so that we could continue with our tour—not the most expensive brand, which would have embarrassed me, but all the same a better brand, with better bindings, than I had had before. He did this without any fuss, though not without a certain constraint as he put the money down on the counter; he would have been embarrassed if I had shown signs of being impressed by money. Of course I thanked him. I was never a practiced skier and am to this day amazed by his patience with me. Naturally W. was always ahead, though not by conscious effort; he never tumbled, and when I eventually caught up with him, out of breath and white from many falls, he would always say: Take your time. He never minded waiting. In the meantime he had been enjoying the landscape, and now he pointed with his stick as he named the peaks and drew my attention to a nearby pine tree or to the incredible light, so uniquely characteristic of the Engadine. He loved the Engadine, the country of *Zarathustra,* which I had also read but had not, perhaps, completely understood. As the weaker member I was allowed to decide when to continue our descent. W. did not press me, though on his own he could long ago have been in Pontresina. But that did not matter. He was giving me his Engadine. I still love it today. What would have become of me without W. it is hard to say. Perhaps I should have had more confidence in myself—too much, I suspect. In a certain sense W. had always encouraged me—for example, to give up my writing and to study architecture. I did not expect W. to look over the few buildings I was responsible for. I suspect he would have been disappointed—rightly so. And he too would have suffered from his disappointment. For a number of years I did indeed talk a lot to him about architecture, though I never

managed to convince him of the merits of my teachers. Later I spoke of Corbusier, of Mies van der Rohe, of Saarinen, and then he would put on an expression as if I were talking about music—of which, as W. knew, I basically understood nothing—or philosophy. W. knew the sort of person I was from our school days. He became a distinguished collector. After the event, but only after it, I would perhaps feel there were things I ought not to have put up with, but I never disliked him on that account: the mistake had been my own. In his parents' villa there were a number of paintings that must have seemed to W. quite dreadful, junk in heavy frames inherited from his father's family. Most of it was stored in the cellar. His father had something of the personality of the early pioneers, but was in no way artistic or even intellectual: I liked him very much, this man, as he sat there in front of the fire discoursing soberly on the hunt. Many of the paintings depicted stags and boars, pheasants, hounds. I cannot remember whether the well-meant proposal came from W. himself or from his father or his mother (who also made fun of these pictures). Anyway, the idea was that, if I was able to sell them, I should be allowed to share in the proceeds—that is to say, I could earn myself a little money without having to neglect my studies. The only stipulation was that the sale should not be conducted from the villa. The name and address would attract buyers who might perhaps raise their eyebrows. The proposal made me rather uneasy, but on the other hand I felt it only right that I should do a favor for the family to which I owed so much. A garage was rented in another part of the city. The family also undertook the advertising—an insertion in the newspaper three times a week: BARGAIN / OLD PAINTINGS FROM A PRIVATE COLLECTION. I was given a list of minimum prices; if I could sell at a higher price, my percentage would increase accordingly. After all, there were two or three little Flemish paintings in the collection, so one could still talk of a school, even if they were unsigned. In any event, W. thought it might be amusing for me to play at being a salesman,

to get to know people. So there I stood, three afternoons a week, alone in a garage full of paintings, waiting about for hour after hour. And in fact a few antique dealers did turn up, mostly men in reduced circumstances, but shrewd. Not even the frames interested them, and usually I was not even asked the price. The advertisement continued to appear. A lawyer connected with W.'s father's firm bought a large Magdalene with naked breasts, suitable for a bedroom. The stags and boars were heavier going. I drew attention to landscapes that were of interest not only to hunters, landscapes with windmills against the light or with reeds. When asked where the paintings came from I was never to answer with a name, but was simply to say that it was a PRIVATE COLLECTION. On the other hand, I did talk about a school of Flemish painters, until one day a shabby old man, a customer, laughed in my face. Did I really believe that? It was springtime, I remember, and at six o'clock I was glad to ride away on my bicycle, even if I had sold nothing. How were things going? W. wanted to know, quite interested, though only from a human point of view, since he did not need the money. On the other hand, W. was quite right in pointing out that the garage also gave me a chance to do some reading. The whole enterprise lasted, I think, three weeks—not very long. And I did actually earn something from it, though I always settled quickly for the minimum price. So I was not much of a salesman; I felt besmirched, as if I were God knows who, yet I had to admit that my father, a former architect, had also become a real-estate agent toward the end of his life. W. knew that, of course. It did not bother him. He had no prejudices of that kind. Later, making a joke of something that was in fact anything but, when I was unable to conceal that I felt in some way besmirched, I caused W. some distress, as I could see from the deeply pained look on his face. But, after all, his family had not forced it on me. I had accepted their proposal, as I had to admit to myself. It never came to a showdown. In those years, if I am not mistaken, W. had hardly any other friends, certainly none of his

own age; he revered his cello teacher, an elderly sculptor in Zurich, a scholar who was a friend of the family. He had a girl friend, but took care that I should not get to know her; a very non-middle-class girl whom he never married and could never forget. A tragic affair of the heart of which W. spoke to me over a long period of years. Once, at his invitation, I joined him in a three-week walking tour through the Jura. W. was feeling the need to describe his inner conflicts. What he had to say—and indeed found so difficult to say that he could not even begin until the second day—revealed once again the variety of his emotions, his unusual intensity, his sense of responsibility toward the girl he loved as well as toward himself. And it was an unconventional sense of responsibility too. I felt honored that W. should let me into the secret of his complicated worries, even though I never set eyes on his mistress. Of course I had no advice to offer. Paternity also affected W. more than most. Things became difficult between us when I again took up my writing, when my things were published or presented on the stage. I knew what W. would think of them. In consequence we met only rarely, and then without mentioning them. I was also reading an increasing number of works that W. had not read, and I was unable to convert him to any of them. My interest in certain authors tended to arouse his skepticism against them: Brecht, for example. When it turned out that we admired the same authors—Strindberg, for instance, or Gide—W. was unwilling to talk about them; he had discovered them for himself and reserved them for himself. Of course, the fact that I had now abandoned architecture did not make me an author in his eyes, and so, as I said, we never talked about my writing, less and less about literature at all. W. had a different approach to literature. I realized that he could never read my books. He had different criteria, to which they could never measure up. All the same, he did make the effort. He once saw a play of mine (DIE CHINESISCHE MAUER) and wrote me a letter that could not have come at all easily to him, since his feelings about the play,

though expressed in a friendly way, were obviously mixed. Many years later he went to see another of my plays (BIEDERMANN UND DIE BRANDSTIFTER)—at least, that is what somebody later told me. But he said nothing about it. We were by this time mature men. Even more difficult for him, I suspect, was my interest in politics. This we hardly ever discussed. The social conflicts of which I was becoming increasingly aware W. saw in the framework of a larger context. He did indeed listen to what I had to say, but then he would raise the conversation to philosophical levels, in which I was no longer sure of my bearings. I remember that during the Second World War, when we Swiss, though neutral, also had to black out our cities, W. thought it both ridiculous and unnecessary that his parents' villa, which lay on the edge of the city, should be subject to these tedious regulations; for how could the lights of a single house betray the whereabouts of a whole blacked-out city? He was against Hitler but also skeptical of democracy, with every vote having an equal value. Of course, W. had been spoiled by his environment, and he suffered inwardly for that very reason. He was impressed that I, his former school friend and never above average in class, was now earning my own living, however modestly. He saw it, I know, as his personal problem. To imagine that he was incapable of earning a living likewise was of course absurd, but it worried him now and again. If W. could have been satisfied with achievements of the sort other people have to be content with in order to earn a living, it would have been easy enough for him to earn his. And he knew it too. Altogether I had little to say to my friend. If, as sometimes happened, I criticized him, what was the result? W. listened carefully, but my criticism turned out to be as nothing compared with his own criticism of himself. There was no trace of conceit in him. On the contrary, he regarded himself as a defeated man. Toward me, as I well knew, he was indulgent. Standards such as hardly anybody could ever live up to he demanded exclusively from himself, not from me. Of course, he passed judgment on people,

and his judgment was even severer than that of others—it was fundamental and was therefore complicated. But he never divulged it, neither to third persons nor in private. He had no wish to destroy anyone. His verdict on a person remained his own secret, if sometimes it cost him an effort, as one could feel. My megalomania must often have caused him distress. At such times he would involuntarily draw his eyebrows together, but say nothing. I could only guess at his true opinion, and he relied on one's guessing only as much of it as one could at the moment bear. Greedy for appreciation from a person whose opinion was more fundamental and more penetrating than that of the general public, I was of course very susceptible when, for example, he would suddenly shower me with praise for my skill in lighting a stove in a mountain hut or in repairing my bicycle or, in later years, driving my Fiat, preparing a crab paella, and things of that sort. The praise was completely genuine: W. was incapable of praising dishonestly. W. was best man at my wedding, I at his. Even in later years we found enough to talk about when we went on long walking tours together, without his ever having to mention my books. W. experienced a great deal—though I do not mean adventures of a practical kind; it was rather that he lived so intensely that he could make misfortunes that would seem trivial in others' lives assume exemplary significance, whether it was a burst water pipe, his late arrival at an auction sale, or the behavior of his daughter's foster mother. It could be hard work, but all the same I always realized why I admired W. so much: the wealth of implications in his descriptions left one feeling that one had never experienced very much oneself. I shall never forget how he described the last weeks of his old father. The villa, which I no longer visited, became ghostly, his continuing to live in it himself a retribution. I eyed him from the side as we walked and walked, and he continued talking: a Lenz among the mountain tops. He did not compare himself to that wild poet, nor to Strindberg, Hölderlin, van Gogh, or Kleist, but he felt closer in spirit to them

than to ordinary mortals like ourselves: a tragic figure. Today I can still remember his telephone number, though it is at least fifteen years since I last dialed it. And it has never happened, or at least very seldom, that I have failed to remind myself: Today is W.'s birthday. On his fiftieth birthday I sent him a telegram, from Rome. I cannot say exactly when I ceased to think of him. The fact that in the meantime I had become prosperous could not have escaped his knowledge. What would he think about that? Occasionally I heard about him from a mutual friend, a painter—for instance, that his large art collection was keeping him fully occupied. Not even this painter had ever set eyes on the collection, which must have been a unique one. Afterward it occurred to me that I myself had never set eyes on the companions of his life, with the exception of the upper-middle-class woman he had married and of whom he often spoke even after their divorce. His first partner, I know, had been a nurse. Whenever W. spoke of these women, it was always in a tone of great earnestness, even when he kept their names to himself: he would just talk, for instance, of a Spanish girl in Barcelona, and so on. He was not afraid of major conflicts. I did once bridle when his mother told me what a burden his wife's illness was on him: it kept him so much from his work. I expressed sympathy for the sick wife as well. I am not suggesting that W. was just an egoist. Not only was he more self-sacrificing than most people; he also had more to sacrifice. On one occasion it was almost comic. We had not met for some years when, as so often before, we made a tour together in the Alps, GROSSER AUBRIG. Since on doctor's orders I had been off alcohol for six months and had taken an hour's walk daily, I managed the climb much more easily than W. I must admit I enjoyed not having to make him wait. It was he who lagged behind. We were not far from the summit, but W. did not wish to go on. To see our relationship thus would, I know, be too primitive. He just happened, on this last tour of ours, to be out of form. He

had recently (while I was in the hospital) been going through difficult times. And after all, we were not sportsmen, but two men in our fifties. I never dared to talk to him about my work. His silent suspicion that I was succumbing to public success had become my own suspicion. I was grateful to him for that. Actually I have never been able to take pleasure in my own writings without first putting W. entirely out of my mind: enjoying them behind his back, so to speak. Beneath his blue eyes I never felt comfortable about them. I betrayed them, at least through silence—a silence which was mutual. Our last meetings were in 1959. The woman with whom I was then in love had studied philosophy; she had written about Wittgenstein and obtained her doctorate with a thesis on Heidegger. W., who was seeing her now for the first time, could not have known that; he had already heard her name, but he did not know her poetical work. She too found it difficult to open up with W., just as it was difficult for Wittgenstein's TRACTATUS LOGICUS, which W. did not know. I kept silent, not wishing to disturb them with my half-knowledge. For a woman who was living with me to understand philosophy was something he evidently could not accept. He did not feel comfortable in our apartment. In spite of the champagne, which I knew he liked. And she knew how much I owed to this man—I had told her often and in detail about that, without, however, really managing to describe my friend adequately to her. And now here he was, a man large in stature, somewhat heavy. There was no philosophical debate. W. just sat back in his chair in a way I had never seen before: pure man! Not that, like everybody else, he flirted with the woman, who was rather vexed; he just sat regarding her as she tried to talk. We had already had our first glass, so that was not the trouble. No one was leading the conversation. Since the lady evidently considered herself to be a writer (though her books had not been mentioned), W. felt impelled to talk about literature, not asking, but stating—although, as he said,

he had found little time recently for reading, since he was so busy cataloguing his collection. In his eyes Hölderlin was certainly greater than Hans Carossa, but all the same he still saw Hans Carossa as a writer. The woman, who had nothing to say to that, asked him about his collection and wanted to know why W. would not show it to us, not even to her. His assertion that he even had the right, if he wished, to destroy the treasures of ancient China as well as the works of medieval masters and living painters, since he had not just bought them with money but had made them his own through choosing them and spending years of his life on them—this was not said jokingly. His view found no acceptance with us. All the same, as I later heard, the woman had pleased him in a certain way. Somebody told me that W. had later wondered how Frisch had ever found such a companion. I never repaid the money that had made my studies possible; I think that would have hurt him—it would, so to speak, have nullified his generosity. When I recently recognized W. in the street in Zurich, I felt a sense of dismay: there was an awareness in me of what I owed to him, but no feeling. I did not write to tell him that I had recognized him in the street. Today I am no longer even interested to know what W. thinks of our long association. It is this above all that distresses me. I feel that my friendship with W. was basically a disaster for me, but that W. himself was in no way to blame. If I had been less submissive, the outcome would have been better—for him as well.

OVERLOOK:

The notice promised something that is not to be had. Once from a little hill they do catch sight of the blue car in the distance; neither his car nor hers, but NATIONAL CAR RENTAL. There it is, still standing by itself on the sunny parking lot. He realizes that nobody knows where he is today, and that pleases him. Even though they no longer believe that this path will ever bring them to the

coast, they continue to walk along, so as not just to remain standing among these shrubs and bushes in which no one can see them. A radio tower that has now come into view reveals how far off the coast still is. U.S. MILITARY AREA: he had seen that on the map. This way they would not reach the sea anyway. They are lost. But it doesn't matter: they are where they are; together without a goal. Rather than just sitting down on the ground, they keep on walking. There have been finer landscapes, but all the same he tries out his camera, MICROFLEX 200. In the viewfinder: a rock, bare or with bushes, sky, in the distance a squat lighthouse. ZOOM. No good either: the lighthouse just looking a bit more squat. Not worth setting the camera in motion. It is noon now—a pity they are not at the sea. It is Saturday. Once, when he has to stop to tie the lace of his left shoe, she slows down to wait for him. Anyone seeing them would not immediately know what to make of them: father and daughter, or a couple? They do not kiss. For a while, having reached a wider path, they walk hand in hand, but this path leads in the wrong direction, and they abandon it. It evidently leads to a farm; they can see a grazing horse. In the distance a car moving on the highway: no sound. They can hear birds—not song, but warning twitters. Again he thinks that nobody (in either New York or Berlin) can guess where they are at this moment. They are out of reach. That they have in common. Now and again they say something: LOOK AT THIS, to assure themselves that they are here and not somewhere else. Probably nobody is looking for her either. They are lucky about the weather: yesterday it was still raining. The knot in her hair has loosened as she jumped over a puddle; her red hair (like pale rose hips) is now falling over her shoulders. She stops to retie the knot. I AM GETTING HUNGRY, she says and, since they are now standing still, he must also say something. DO YOU KNOW DONALD BARTHELME? he asks, HIS WORK? She does not read much. HE IS A GOOD FRIEND OF OURS, he adds, so as not to make himself out as an expert on American literature. Meanwhile she has finished tying her knot and, since

he promised an hour ago to find the parking lot again, he now goes ahead. Ignoring paths. There is a Coca-Cola can in the grass. So they are not the first people to have been there. Then her hair comes untied again; this time she gives up and lets it hang loose. Lynn is even more out of reach than he. True, yesterday, in order to get away early, she had left word where she was going with friends in the office. But if somebody were to ring up all the hotels on this long island: not even her Christian name is registered anywhere, only his—and nobody suspects they are together.

MAX, YOU ARE A LIAR

Not everything is turning out successfully on this day. He does, however, manage to find the parking lot (it is only in dreams that I can never find the car), and the blue Ford is there, standing in its oblong, still the only car on the lot. Lynn has the key; she drives. She would be happy with just a hamburger or a pizza. Out by the lighthouse, where the road ends, the restaurant is still closed for the winter, only the toilet is open. He waits for her on the terrace. A Stars and Stripes fluttering in the wind; a coin-operated telescope which he does not use. It is windy here. Whenever Lynn is out of sight for a while and he has to wait for her, he is not impatient, just curious to see what she really looks like. Here you can see the sea, but he is trying to remember her voice. Whenever she phones him, she just says HI, for he knows her voice. Her skin he knows too: pale, as with all red-haired women, but without freckles. He leans against the wall, his back to the sea. She will approach over this deserted terrace, and he is prepared to be surprised when, whatever she looks like, she comes up to him and is simply there. It is now midday. Everything is outside: a fluttering flag, a squat lighthouse, gulls, music from a transistor somewhere, the gleaming metal on the distant parking lot, sun, wind—

Lynn is nearly 31.

A few weeks ago I, a grandfather, visited my elder daughter. It was high time: my granddaughter can already talk. It was also the first time I had seen my German son-in-law. They met in Scotland and had informed me on a picture postcard (of a green hill) of their intention to marry. Our meeting was neither easy nor difficult. My daughter, the same age as Lynn, sat spinning unbleached sheep's wool as we talked. Before that we had been for a walk, a father and daughter, talking in our native dialect. Years ago, in great distress, she had written to me, full of trust, and I had replied. She had also visited me with her previous young man, whom I had liked very much . . . He had been the first child of my first fiancée, whom I did not marry, and she was the first of my daughters; perhaps it was for that reason they did not marry . . . They are getting on very well, I am told. It never became clear why we now have so little to say to each other. She had got in a bottle of red German wine. They neither of them drink wine, so I left the bottle half empty. I was with them for an afternoon, a night, and the following morning. It was only in the train to Hamburg, when I wanted to read, that the reason became clear. I do not deny that the fault was mine, not to be wiped out with letters to my grown-up daughter explaining why, years before, I had got a divorce. Our guilt has its uses. It justifies much in the lives of others.

MONTAUK

They are now sitting on the rocks. There are other people there, vacationers, looking for shells thrown up by the breakers; three young blacks with a transistor, getting louder and then softer as they pass; they do not look at the couple.

DIRTY OLD MAN

This is not how he sees himself.

HOW DO YOU CALL THOSE BIRDS?

he asks, simply to make an excuse for them to gaze into the distance (they are ordinary gulls) and take his mind off himself: a man, too heavy, but still agile, wearing a Western shirt, not because he imagines it makes him look younger, but because it is practical; with hair (what is still left of it) looking always uncombed, even when there is no sea wind to ruffle it; in appearance no gentleman; hair gray with white patches . . . He remembers when he last swam in the sea.

SABLES D'OR, July 1973:

We agreed to separate.

The coast here is rocky, without a beach, the surf moderate. It does not rage, but curls and splashes between the round rocks, leaving bubbles of foam. A muddy pond. They had not sought the open Atlantic but the bay, even though the mainland cannot be seen.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

The need for work.

WAS SAGEN DIE DELPHINE?

I like the title (What Do the Dolphins Say?), but that is as far as it ever got. I found it recently in an old loose-leaf notebook, which I had brought with me on account of some addresses. Beside it I

had written: the story of a contained optimism. There is no real action. The main character, the New Man, never appears. Dolphins have at least the intelligence of human beings, though neither arms nor hands. For which reason (says Lynn) they have never conquered the world; since they have flippers and not arms, they do not destroy the world. Dolphins have never, for example, founded a nation, and (as one must admit) they give the impression of being free of care. Lynn has spoken with dolphins, and wants no child on land—

In 1972 I knew no woman called Lynn.

He is still surprised that he knows this body of hers. He had not expected it. If Lynn were not now and again to give a sign that she too remembered that night, his hands would not dare to touch her head.

In 1972 I had been preoccupied with the world.

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

The writings on the walls now look faded, and one has the impression that change is no longer expected. Coming up from the subway to daylight, one sees people walking exactly as they did two years ago. Things simply go on: wait on red, walk on green. Nobody knows what is really happening. The newspapers just pretend they know it from day to day. WATERGATE—if only that had never been. My friends are younger than I, but they already know how powerless they are. Only the women are still hoping for change. All else is détente. The Red Square in Moscow is untouched; at the Friedrichstrasse terminal in Berlin everything is as it always was, only the price of admittance has risen to ten marks. No rearmament for war has ever cost as much as the increasing rearmament to avoid a war that our great powers can

no longer afford; no one can now doubt that the will for peace will be pursued to the point of bankruptcy. Travel? No point in it any more; everywhere the same contained optimism. No chaos. Though it is all still there—otherwise television would not be able to show it: statesmen emerging from planes waving, tanks in the desert, the Pope's Swiss Guard, etc.; one statesman dies, another resigns, but government goes on. The oil of the sheiks and the combines is a solace with a time limit on it, and science is seeking other sources. Beyond that, nothing happens that has not happened before. The fight against pollution is mankind's final commitment—

4/8 NEW YORK
4/17 TORONTO
4/18 MONTREAL
4/19 BOSTON
4/22 CINCINNATI
4/23 CHICAGO
4/25 WASHINGTON

I play my role. Only in the plane or the hotel into which the promoters have booked me am I for a while alone and under no obligation to maintain anything. I take a bath or a shower, then stand at the window—a view over another city. A twinge of stage fright, every time. While reading, I forget each word the moment I have read it. Afterward, a cold buffet. To the same questions I do not always return the same answers, for I do not find any of my answers all that convincing. I watch a lady's nice teeth from close up as she speaks to me; I hold a glass put in my hand, and I sweat. This is not my métier, I think to myself, but here I stand—

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT RENOWN?

When Lynn once put this question—it was in her kitchenette,

where for the first time she was preparing a meal for the stranger —he did not know the word. He did not have his little Langenscheidt handy. Lynn explained what the word meant. Having understood the question, he was now ready to open the can, provided there was a can opener. Lynn searched. An unholy clutter in the drawers, but the can opener was found. But by now her question had got lost, and they were talking about calories . . . I once wanted fame: as a goalkeeper playing for my country. Then not only did my interests change, but also my interest in the act of doing gained the upper hand. When Uwe Johnson asked me straight out over a late-night beer in Spoleto (1962): Herr Frisch, what do you do with your fame? I did not know what to answer. Was he trying to diagnose megalomania? Of course I am pleased that my plays are produced, that my books are read more and more. The consequences of that do not escape me: I *am* a well-known writer. In the woods near Zurich we are overtaken by a couple, and I notice that they suddenly break off their conversation. After twenty paces she looks back, then he. In the public sauna bath it is more of a nuisance: the naked man who suddenly in front of the showers ventures at last to ask me: AREN'T YOU HERR FRITSCH? He is obviously not a reader, but he knows I am a well-known personality, for he has seen on television where and how I live. At the moment, naked as we are, neither of us has a pen to write down my name correctly. Sometimes it brings advantages. A German customs official, having seen my passport, does not want to look inside my suitcase, but to be helpful; he not only knows my name but also remembers a play of mine he liked: DER BESUCH DER ALTEN DAME. The same thing can happen without confusing me with Dürrenmatt. As recently, for instance, in London: SIR, IT IS A GREAT HONOR FOR ME, says a young passport controller, and finds time, in spite of the crowds, to cite three English titles and to let me know which he liked best. I was pleased: it came at a moment when I had need of it. When in a restaurant I am seeking a hook to hang up a lady's coat, I of course never think

that I am being observed. She says: Let's go somewhere else—here you're being listened to! For a long time now I have not needed to pretend when my name is whispered close by: I really am deaf to it. Of course I have known for some years that I have readers, and I have seen them often enough in rooms and halls, but I do not expect them to be traveling in the same bus. I do not regard myself as a public figure when I am waiting on a railroad platform, and I do not have to exert myself to look particularly modest; I am occupied with quite different things. How well known I am I learned one day from my daughter. It annoys her: she has only to mention her full name at a dance and it becomes my name and upsets the chat. There's nothing I can do about that. Incidentally, I did not become well known all of a sudden. I do not know which is the better way. Someone who wakes up one morning to find himself well known comes to see it as only natural, and he does not, like the other man, feel surprised from time to time; the other man appears at times to be coquettish. I always feel a slight shock when somebody I do not know suddenly addresses me by name and turns out to be a reader. What does one do? Frequently they admire things one would today no longer wish to write, and one feels rather like a traitor. I usually pretend then that I am in a hurry. Of course, it can happen that someone who has drunk too much gets a rise out of me, or at least tries to, assuming that I have a high opinion of myself. I cannot just get up and walk out; but in such cases there is anyway nothing one can do, no words or anything that will help. It is not my point of view this person finds so hard to take, but my success; he is usually a fellow Swiss. But most of the time I forget I am a man with a dossier. Most people who recognize me are discreet; they leave me to drink my beer in peace, a Rumpelstiltskin who is giving nothing away, and subsequently I am told by others where I drank my beer two days ago. I do not want to exaggerate. Naturally things vary from district to district. In all places where working people live I feel safe, without being particularly

pleased about it. Who are my readers? When an upholsterer in Berlin asks me: Are you the writer? I can see that my yes gives him pleasure. Why? The need to look up to somebody. This man has read my name somewhere and is in no doubt that anyone with a name is entitled to it. He is glad I am having curtains put up in Berlin and takes particular care with his work. One is spoiled. To stand in a line before a bank counter bores me as much as anyone else. I contain myself like everybody else, but under observation. One even gets used to that. Another consequence: when I engage people in conversation for the first time, they do not talk just about themselves and their plans, but about my writings. Or if they realize that this—and particularly this—is not expected of them, they confine themselves simply to listening. I sit there in a certain isolation, which cannot always be broken and has the danger of tempting one into monologues. Social intercourse becomes boring. There is one type who crops up now and again: a man who at first sight is an intellectual. For two hours he acts as if we had not been introduced and at the cold buffet says not a single word. Later, when I am engaged in an animated conversation with others, he will perhaps listen from a distance, which excuses him from joining in the discussion. In the meantime I really have forgotten his name, and so our contact begins with my having to make an apology. In spite of that he does not come any closer as long as others are still taking part in the conversation, but later in the evening I cannot get rid of him. We stand in a corner as he rigorously demonstrates that fame (as he calls it) makes absolutely no impression on him. An intelligent man. What he himself does he is reluctant to say. He ends by apologizing. What for? We do not have to be of the same opinion. When I ask to see his essay, which is shortly to be published, he tells me that it is now out of date; he would prefer me not to read what he has written about me. Obviously he assumes that it will only offend me. Why should it not perhaps persuade me? Success over a long period makes it easy at times not to be vain. That is its

good side. And something more: I am not one of those protected by a legend. At times I can feel it in their handshakes; their gossip, of which I am ignorant, makes the people to whom I am introduced feel uneasy. As a rule I do not attempt to find out what they have been saying and, when it eventually comes to my ears, it tells me more about them than about myself. Envy? Not the first success or even a second, but success over a long period is the thing that particularly vexes those who worship success; they imagine one has no other urge or aim in life but to annoy them with successes (whatever they consider these to be); and in time they get so perturbed that not even a failure can pacify them. There are also the admirers. An old man in Berlin is one of these; I hear it from his wife, who bullies him into introducing himself to me. The face of a schoolgirl in the street; I see that I am teaching material, and she looks at me as if I could not see her in her naked admiration. There are also the flatterers: many of these are not even pursuing an aim. And then the notables, who seem to get something from having me enjoy myself at their long tables—and their wives. Something quite different: a Soviet citizen, a youngish man who took part in a demonstration in Red Square in 1968 and whom I recently met by chance at a party, brought me greetings from a Siberian labor camp, a word of thanks in the name of inmates whom I shall never set eyes on. The unexpected greeting hits me like a warning, a reminder that I must never let myself down. Fame? In contrast to success, it makes nobody envious. It does not lead to flattery. Even if its possessor is embarrassed into permitting it, fame itself does not admit flattery. I am thinking of meetings with Beckett: it is as easy to talk to him as to sit silent with him over a game of chess: his work seems remote from him, but at the same time he is identical with it. That the other person should feel flattered—this situation does not arise, since it is not a star who is sitting opposite him, nor is it a person trying to efface himself with a show of modesty, thereby betraying that he thinks himself a star. This is

also true when the fame is less. Nobody expects a famous person to be hankering after a sign of understanding, let alone praise; if anybody does expect that, he will soon discover his mistake. As an individual the famous person may prove a disappointment: perhaps, for instance, he is an unhappy man. If he chooses to disclaim a part or all of his work, that is his own affair; his opinion of himself is not binding on others; the name that he received at birth and has used as a signature throughout his life now denotes a public effect no longer identifiable with his individual person. This is something he must learn, and if he does not learn it, he is bound to suffer. Fame does not silence criticism, but it is expected that this criticism should no longer be applied personally. And rightly so, for in this case it could be taken as criticism not of an individual and his work, but of his fame. A society needs famous people; the question is whom it chooses for that role. Any criticism of its choice is by implication a criticism of that society.

LYNN:

Her voice, when he is not hearing it, is more alive to him than her face when he is not looking at it. She draws her vowels out long in the American way, but raises them at the same time. His name, as spoken by her, sounds bright, the final *x* clicks like a xylophone. She does not chew her words. It is not a voice of any great sensitivity. It sounds rather like notes played on very tight strings, with a reverberation that gives it body. There are moments when her voice is all he needs.

Jottings on the plane:

It is worth flying first class once in a while; beside me a youngish passenger who, as I find out over the champagne, deals in bombs. / An honest man is one who is rather embarrassed when told he is an honest man. / At Harvard a female Germanist who

is working on Ingeborg Bachmann as woman and artist; she is very grateful for my help: some addresses in Rome. / Asked in Cincinnati what it feels like for an author to be confronted with his early works. I forget what I answered, though I might have mentioned that painter who once in his wife's presence said: OH, ALL THIS OLD RUBBISH, THIS CRAP! Later, when there was talk of a retrospective exhibition, she tried to cut short his shilly-shallying by saying: FORGET ALL THAT OLD RUBBISH—not realizing that she had no right to speak of his work in those terms: the description had been his, not hers. / When one says to Americans: I AM A SOCIALIST, one does not forfeit their respect; on the contrary, they are convinced one is some sort of a star to be able to make such claims. / From the plane it seems inconceivable that on this broad earth with all its settlements and cities one could ever be missed. This feeling induces a slight sense of euphoria. But the same feeling, experienced in some city or other, makes one thoroughly miserable. / Saying that someone is offended is worse than saying he is a bastard. In the latter case one is not being condescending. / Feelings of guilt, without really knowing what I mean by guilt. / Twice—both in Montreal and in Chicago—I was publicly asked: Is it true, Herr Frisch, that you hate women? / The relationship between age and ignorance: how would that look on a graph? In spite of the increase in knowledge, the curve would grow steeper with age, when ignorance becomes infinite. / Has one ever seen two dogs who, when they meet, start talking about a third dog because they don't know what else to do with each other? / Like a fairy tale of an old fisherman who pulls in his net, pulls with all his strength till he gets the net ashore, and then finds only himself in it. He starves to death. / Her Catholic attitude toward truth. / Fears about my memory. It is like trying to write something with chalk on a piece of glass: the glass absorbs only a fraction of the marks, leaving the sentence unreadable. I remember exactly to whom I once said that, and where. We were walking down a long jetty, and while he was talking I understood all

he was saying to me. At the end of the jetty we came to a halt. If he had gone on walking, beyond the jetty and over the pale water, I should have followed him. And only now would I sink and drown, for I no longer know how he explained it. / Impotent (for the first time) at thirty-five—

ARENA STAGE:

During the morning a feeling of euphoria on seeing the empty stage in Washington. A year ago they played on it my fable of the count who resorted to an ax (GRAF ÖDERLAND). The actors and actresses introduced themselves to me in the names of the characters they had portrayed: COCO, ELSA, MARIO, or I AM THE WIDOW, I AM THE MURDERER. I saw in the evening what they could do—it was Büchner's LEONCE AND LENA. I was delighted, and what I afterward said in the dressing rooms was sincerely meant, so I really earned the kisses I received. I had to promise to write a play for them and to come to Washington to stage it. And I did promise. What sort of play? Something new, I felt: a play of a different sort, cheerful, shameless, not necessarily a comedy, but without a message, with no hopes going beyond the mere play in itself. It was not myself I promised that, but the actress who had just played ROSETTA; there has to be someone standing there, a body, to make me believe my own promises. And that is indeed how it all began, my urge to write plays; I see some bodies that can act, and I want them to act me, to give body to my words—many bodies, male and female.

LYNN:

He had simply removed the spectacles from her face, in order for once to see her eyes. She had been laughing at his English. He did it without touching her temples, as careful as an optician with his patient. She stood in her kitchenette, plates in both her hands, for

the moment helpless. The color of her eyes: like pale slate beneath the water. He decided that spectacles did not suit her, and she called him unfair. BECAUSE I NEED GLASSES, she said. So he gave her the spectacles back. WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A SEAT? she said. A charming apartment. BUT VERY SMALL, she said. All the same, he walked up and down, his hands in his pockets. LIKE A PRISONER, she said, OR LIKE AN ANIMAL. She had invited him because he had recently paid for that business lunch and because, she suspected, he had not eaten anywhere but in restaurants during the past three weeks. A kind thought for which, as he sat down to be her guest, he was grateful. Lynn was a slow and painstaking cook, unable to converse as she worked. However, he was allowed to help a little: slicing tomatoes, which he could do without messing up the little writing desk. He himself could talk and work at the same time, but nothing much came into his mind—just that the lakes in Canada were still frozen, all those many lakes scattered about like scraps of paper with frayed edges, as if one had snatched a sheet out of the typewriter and torn it to pieces. The job of slicing the two tomatoes was soon done. It was Sunday, early evening, and still light outside. He got to his feet again as a frying pan sizzled, and inspected her books. He knew he was being a bore. He had talked quite enough about literature during the preceding days. Could he also cook? Lynn did not have many books, which relieved him. Discussions on literature generally consist merely of demonstrating one's knowledge and tossing judgments about, and he felt no inclination for that; nor for anything else. Lynn had bought a bottle of wine, SAUTERNE, which he, the male guest, was allowed to open. Something to do. He was glad. Was he feeling hungry? Her long hair, untied, got in the way as she bent down to fetch cream from the refrigerator, and she had to knot it on her head, after first washing, then drying her hands. She was rather nervous, though he was not in fact watching her. There was still time for a pipe, so he sat down again on the couch. He was aware of his age and resolved at last

to accept it. The need for something to be said was becoming urgent. Why didn't Lynn speak? In the silence, filling his pipe, he decided not to stay long after the meal and on no account to kiss her. He filled his pipe as calmly and deliberately as he could. It was not for these hands to grasp her waist. Lynn was busy with a second frying pan. Her apartment was smaller than he had at first thought, with only one door, leading to the bathroom; the other doors were cupboards—it was a one-room apartment. Two windows, both barred; yet in spite of that her TV set had been stolen. So obviously these bars were not all that secure; he could see where they had been bent. WHAT CAN YOU DO? she said. Of course one lives in constant fear. Then she bade her guest pour out the wine. In front of both windows the iron fire escape—a gift to burglars. The view: a windowless wall, hardly five yards away, and above it a bit of sky. Might one ask what the rent was? The things Lynn had been boiling and frying tasted very good, and she was now relaxed. They did not clink glasses; Lynn merely said HI! She ate lustily but got up again to attend to the record player, VIVALDI. Her monthly income was $1,080, or $750 after tax deductions. Two weeks' vacation in a year—the usual here. She could be dismissed at a week's notice if the firm, which occupied a gleaming skyscraper, was dissatisfied with her. It is the way over here.

MONEY

Now we were alone together I dared put to her a paternal question concerning her financial situation. My daughter (her school for handicapped children is not subsidized by the state, since the school is unwilling to put its pedagogic methods at the mercy of some unfeeling authority)—my daughter, busy with unbleached sheep's wool as we talked, had perhaps misunderstood the question. When a father leaves home, what he deprives his children of spiritually cannot be made good with money. Her

reply: We are managing all right at the moment. The expression on her face faintly mocking.

IT IS POINTLESS

Lynn said when after all he kissed her. To sit on the couch she had slipped off her shoes, and without this cork platform she was of course smaller—though not much, just a bit. That had surprised him. She returned his kiss, but then removed the strange hands from her hips—not hastily, but with gentle determination. Her words were not shaming, since she added his name to them, not embarrassing—just clear. Afterward she brought out an album. He did not care for photographs, but he was the guest and had to play his part. Photographs of a college girl's wedding in Florida: Lynn in white, not as slim as now, a large bouquet of flowers in her arms, a wedding reception under palm trees. I GOT MARRIED AS A VIRGIN, she said; THAT SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED. To show him the photographs she tore each one out of the album.

MEMOIRS

When I got married for the first time . . . He attempted to describe it in English: SHE TOO WAS A VIRGIN. But that was not part of the story. SHE WAS AN ARCHITECT TOO. He thought it an unusual story and hoped that his stock of English words would carry him through without the help of the little yellow Langenscheidt; it would, provided that Lynn did not throw in too many questions. I GOT MARRIED TWICE, he said. LEGALLY, he added, to cut it short and come to the point of the story, one of those authentic stories which should not be overlong. Now and again he said: YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN. We rented an apartment, three rooms on the ground floor with a little patch of garden in front, and we were happy, he said, TO HAVE GOT THIS PLACE. It did not concern me at all who else was living in the building. All the same, I did

hear that on the floor above there lived a youngish woman whose whole body was paralyzed, a Frau Haller, whom one consequently never saw on the stairs. I WAS THIRTY-ONE, he said, EXACTLY YOUR AGE. On the morning after the wedding in aristocratic style, we found some flowers lying outside the front door. From Frau Haller on the floor above. I did not go upstairs to thank her. But now and again on the stairs I did meet the elderly woman who was looking after the invalid; her name was Eichelberg or Eichelberger. We would exchange greetings at the mailbox, accompanied for her part always by an inscrutable smile. The invalid listened a lot to the radio—not only music, which is not so distracting, but plays and talks as well. We never heard her voice. As we learned from the laundress who looked after us both, she had been confined to her bed for years and would never again leave it. INCURABLE, yes, that's the word, INCURABLE. When, as frequently happened, I went upstairs to borrow something from Fräulein Eichelberg—salt or a can opener or whatever else our young household still lacked—I always stayed outside on the landing. I could see the little foyer and, through an open door, the room in which the invalid lay. I could not see her—just a bureau and the corner of a carpet. So now I knew where her bed stood. She could hear my voice. After that I would forget all about her. Then came a moment of embarrassment. I needed an electrical fuse—if it had not been for Fräulein Eichelberger's stock of fuses, which could be relied on as firmly as her curious smile, we should often have spent the early days of our marriage in darkness—and I was invited in. I was given to understand that Frau Haller, who had been familiar with the sound of my voice for a whole year now, wanted to meet her neighbor at last. I at once told a lie, saying that we had visitors. It would only have been five or six paces. But another time with pleasure, I said, accepting the fuses gratefully. On the next day I laid in a stock of fuses of my own to save me going upstairs again. I don't really know why I did not want to see Frau Haller. When my wife had forgotten to lay in some-

thing, I told her to go upstairs and borrow it herself. For a whole year I myself did not once go up. During that time our first child arrived, and I decided to look for another apartment, a larger one. However, we did not have enough money for it, so we stayed on. A further year went by before I discovered who Therese Haller really was. It was natural and inevitable that my wife should make friends with Fräulein Eichelberg, who occasionally looked after our little Ursula, and that she should be invited into the apartment above. She did not refuse, and so she got to know the invalid, who could not move even her hands, only her head. All due to the aftereffects of a childbirth. I heard about this as we sat at our table, my wife and I and our little daughter in her high chair, and while the baby sat dribbling I was further told that the incurable invalid already knew me. We had been at grammar school together. Therese Haller-Mock: I had been seeing this name on the mailbox for years without ever recognizing in it the name of the girl I once knew: Thesy. And we had not only been at school together. MY FIRST LOVE, he said, BUT SHE COULD NOT KNOW THIS. A plump girl with blond pigtails which we used to make fun of and try to pull. I was never alone with her. My best friend, a boy from a working-class district, was also in love with Thesy. When his mother was at work in the spinning factory we used her frying pan to cast wedding rings out of lead. Thesy knew nothing of all this. We spent whole afternoons on these castings, in which the lead, shining like silver in the frying pan, invariably lost its gleam as it cooled. By the time the ring was ready to be slipped over a finger, it had always become dull and gray. So there was nothing else to do but catch Thesy in the school playground and pull her pigtails. Once, when she was fourteen years old, she kissed me on the lips during a school outing—my friend too . . . I promised my wife to visit the invalid in the next few days, and I really meant to do it. She could hear us when we were sitting in our garden, for her window was usually open. She was not in any pain, I was told. She read in the newspaper about some profes-

sional success I had had and sent me congratulations, but still I did not go up to see Frau Haller. WHY NOT? He replied: I JUST DON'T KNOW. In the meantime I had rented an attic room in the apartment house, so that I could work at home in the evenings, and this meant that I passed her door almost every evening. IT'S A SHAME, he said, I KNOW. One evening, returning home from a building site, I found our front door wide open, the apartment empty. It was pouring rain, so I knew my wife could not be in the garden. I called out, but in vain. Maybe she was upstairs? In the kitchen there was an empty pan on the stove, which was red hot. When I went upstairs, Fräulein Eichelberger opened the door and told me soothingly that my wife had now regained consciousness. I did not know what had happened and, as I entered this apartment which I had for years avoided entering, I was prepared for anything—except at this moment Frau Haller. My wife had been struck by lightning as she stood at the stove. She lay now in an armchair, still pale and shaken, but conscious. At the time she was expecting our second child. Fräulein Eichelberg invited me to sit down. I did not sit, but stood between my wife and the invalid lying on her bed. Our baby daughter was also there, so the family was complete. Outside, the storm was still going on. Invited once more, after I had heard the full report, to sit down, I thought it time to take notice of Frau Haller. Thesy! I said, as if I had just come into the room. Her bed was not standing where for years I had imagined it to be, but at right angles to what I had expected. This somehow vexed me and made me forget, at this of all moments, what I had known for years: I offered her my hand, which she could not take. However, she smiled. Her arms, the arms of a doll, were lying on the bed beside her body. I sat down somewhere where she would not have to turn her head to speak to me. I had not changed, she thought. Her face was like a child's and she spoke slowly but lightly—though not without a thought for my wife, who was still alarmed by every new flash of lightning. Fräulein Eichelberger had made some

tea. I had turned off our stove. As if she had been expecting our visit, the invalid was wearing a necklace and a bracelet, and her hair was impeccably set. She did not ask why I had never visited her before. Little Ursula was sitting on her bed. After we had drunk a cup of tea, I thought it was time to take my wife back downstairs, although she was enjoying the company, which helped her a bit to forget her shock. I said, as once before: Another time with pleasure. And of course I thanked them for their help and everything. I was uncertain how to take my leave, since Frau Haller could not give me her hand. Should I touch her hand, all the same? Meanwhile we remembered the name of my former friend: Bondi, Emilio Bondi. What had become of him? we wondered. When at last—rather suddenly—I said good-by, I addressed her as Frau Haller. It sounded better than Thesy—more genuine. At the same time I grasped her motionless hand as it lay there on the blanket beside her body. She did not seem to feel it. We left. The doctor examined my pregnant wife and found that everything was all right. Not until a few hours before the birth did I think of it again. It was a wet night, though not thundery. I suddenly had an insane fear that some incurably handicapped creature might be born—incurable from the moment of its birth. I felt guilty. My wife was having similar thoughts, I could see, but neither of us would admit it. I held her sweating hand until the doctor ordered me out, telling me to wait in the living room and drink some brandy meanwhile. I would be called, he said. But my wife wanted me to be present at the birth, and so I stayed until the baby arrived. A healthy baby, a boy. We stayed on in that apartment for some years, but I never visited Frau Haller again, though I always meant to. Later (in 1955) I left the apartment—

MAX, YOU ARE A MONSTER

—and went to live alone: two rooms in a farmhouse, with kitchen

and bath, record player permitted until 10 P.M. One could touch the ceiling without stretching, and the old landlady below could hear every footstep, even when one had no shoes on, the soft noise of the oil stove. Three productive winters, four productive summers—

MONTAUK

Not everything works out right on this cloudless day. His suggestion, after consulting the map: CULLODEN POINT—hoping for a village, a little fishing village with a harbor, masts, houses, local inhabitants (like a year ago in Brittany). It turns out to be not even worth a halt: a flat area full of shacks, some falling down, motorboats tied to buoys, others on land awaiting repair, parking lots, gas stations, with pennants, piles of old tires, an area full of trash of all kinds, puddles, the familiar signs—FOR SALE, TEXACO, PIZZA, SHELL, BLUE RIBBON, HAMBURGER, REAL ESTATE. It is exactly noon—perhaps the young lady called Lynn would now rather be somewhere else by herself . . . AMAGANSETT, another Indian name. Here they stop and get out, though it is not a village either: lawns surrounding little wood-shingled cottages, on both sides of the street the same, just grass and trees around little white wood-shingled cottages, all well cared for, here and there a gleaming automobile, at one spot a sign, FOR RENT. No fences; they are all prosperous in this area, they all have flowers—good living disguised as Nature. Even the blue sky looks well groomed. Here and there a gleaming limousine. A lawn sprinkler against the green boredom. What are they doing here? It is all the same in whichever direction you go: lawns and trees, white houses. Somewhere or other a Stars and Stripes—evidently the center of the place. So peaceful—everything so neat and peaceful and as if in an advertisement. Birds can be heard. It is all suddenly so dismal that there is nothing to talk about. One reads signboards: CHURCH, LIQUOR STORE, ANTIQUE SHOP, BOUTIQUE. What a relief it would be

if one really needed something! Still, Lynn looks at trousers, belts, nothing in particular—just what is there. She will buy nothing and would not want him to give her anything as a present. As always when a woman is looking at things she won't buy at any price, he immediately feels bored. He does not remind Lynn of her hunger. He himself is more conscious of a thirst. The girl who runs the boutique—or at any rate works in it—has not risen from her chair. Barefoot, she is reading. They do not bother her, even when Lynn, so as not to seem impolite, asks a question and is given an answer. The girl seems more concerned with what she is reading in her paperback than with the boutique. He is not sure why he looks at her feet, the feet of this reader. An aquarium with ornamental fish. It is a waste of time. Lynn is now standing near the hats. He is surprised to find himself not feeling on edge. The brain is always thinking something, often enough the same old thing, so he is not interested in what he is thinking. When he picks out of a pile a belt with heavy and forbidding clasps to examine it more closely, Lynn says: MUCH TOO EXPENSIVE. Not even that disturbs the reading girl. So they can leave. BYE, he says. The reading girl does not look up, but she does say: HAVE A NICE DAY. In the car (Lynn driving) he knows what he was thinking in the boutique. It was: I should like to describe this day, just this day, our weekend together, how it came about and how it develops. I should like to tell it without inventing anything. In the role of a simple narrator.

Why this weekend in particular?

—instead of describing my first purchases in the little street market in Berlin, the empty apartment in which I wait each day for the workers to come? The hot water should be fixed by tomorrow. Why not describe the streets in this half of Berlin, its taverns, its half share of the Wannsee lake, its pine trees beneath the northern sky? An afternoon in the city to buy kitchen

utensils—the seventh time we have furnished a kitchen. The apartment lies along the approach path to the Tempelhof Airport; the planes come over low, making everything in the back yard vibrate, touching down from the west and taking off toward the west; between times silence in Friedenau, the meadow of peace. One always needs more things than one at first thought: slatted blinds to protect the writing desk from the morning sun. I screw five coat hooks to the wall. Only two days ago we were still saying: I'm going to the apartment. Now we say: I'm going home. All sorts of cardboard boxes masquerading as furniture; books on the floor. An old cabinet which strikes every visitor at once: who discovered it? You discovered it. Who discovered the long table? I take care of some pegs. The empty white rooms echo. Music from the little transistor. It is just the sort of apartment we had searched for in vain in Zurich: plain, but with high ceilings. And so we have come to Berlin. There are plenty of other reasons: to live together with the Wall, a few friends already there, some of them shaming me with their courage, their long and persistent courage. On Sunday a visit to Kleist's grave. The best example of modern interior architecture I know: Scharoun's Philharmonie, the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra's new concert hall. A cold February, the air thin. The first room to become habitable is the kitchen with its gas stove. The apartment must not be too full of furniture. I think so too, but one does need chairs. The telephone stands on the parquet floor. A little round table reminds one of a garden restaurant or a bistro. An Art Nouveau candlestick which Jurek brought over from the DEUTSCHE DEMOKRATISCHE REPUBLIK, and another Art Nouveau candlestick which you like too. Oswald Wiener runs a bar called EXIL to which we enjoy going. You discovered some chairs at fifty marks each and were delighted with the shop, run by two bearded students. There I am, examining the chairs, and you turn away, as if I do not belong to the chairs, am just another customer. The bearded owners, offering us wine, address us as a single customer. An afternoon on the lake,

Schlachtensee. When you are cheerful I forget for a while your unhappiness with me . . .

JOURNAL INTIME

If on some occasion I happen to read something in it—because, for instance, I need to know a date—I am always disconcerted: to find that two or five years ago I came to exactly the same conclusion—only to forget it because I had not succeeded in living up to it; in fact, I had been tenaciously doing the very opposite.

IT IS POINTLESS

He had been expecting her call from the lobby. A summer evening outside. Instead, there was a ring at the room door, and Lynn was standing there. Not until she had come in and he had closed the door did she say: HI! She did not take off her shaggy jacket, since they did not intend to stay in the room. No handshakes in this country. Today Lynn had not found time for her daily meditation —twenty minutes before breakfast, twenty minutes in her office chair after work. Today the boss had sent for her: a conference. All she needed now was twenty minutes and a chair. He did not have to leave the room; his presence would not disturb her as long as he did not say anything. After she had laid her purse on the carpet, a large purse rather like a bag, she sat there silently with her eyes closed, hands laid flat and relaxed on her trousers. Meanwhile, she said, he could read the paper, BOOK REVIEW. But he preferred to busy himself in the little kitchen, so as to be farther away; he did not, however, take off his jacket. So while she sat and breathed, her hands relaxed and motionless, he hardly looked at her. She was breathing, nothing more. Lightly to start with and then, it seemed to him, ever more slowly and regularly. He had, incidentally, glanced at his watch, in order to keep a check on the twenty minutes. Once her right leg shifted, but she did not

seem to notice. It did not slip, as it does when people go to sleep in a chair. Lynn was not asleep. During the first minutes, which seemed long, he thought: SHOW. Then he went to stand at the window, his back to her, his hands in his pockets. He looked down once again on the street crossing. This time from the eleventh floor—two years ago it had been the sixteenth. People seen from this height: hats with shoulders, bright, flat as buttons, but accompanied by their long shadows when the sun is shining or street lights are burning. Their shadows revolve around them, contracting and then growing long again. When one is waiting for somebody (as was the case two years ago) and therefore anxious to recognize her, things are difficult: a hat of the same kind and one thinks she is coming, she is not very late, no grounds for suspicion. But one can be mistaken: the hat goes off in another direction. When he at last turned away from the window, to save himself thinking the same old thoughts, twelve minutes had passed, and the strange young woman was still sitting in his chair, head upright, lips closed and thin, eyes shut. INCONNUE DE LA SEINE, he thought, trying to see her ironically. Not even that disturbed her. Eventually he sat down in the other chair to fill his pipe. He was not in fact waiting. He was simply sitting there, his elbows on his knees, the forgotten pipe in his hand, feeling no need for activity. It was not quiet, with the dull hum of the air conditioner, an occasional bus, and at one point the siren of a police car. He regarded the carpet. Apparently all the rooms here had the same carpet material. Even that was no new thought . . . Once, when he was tipsy, he had lain down on this dirty carpet with arms outstretched and proclaimed that he could feel the earth's curve. That was after midnight, when she returned to the hotel and was not required to say from where, and why so late—he was glad to have somebody to whom he could say: ICH UMARME DIE ERDE—I am embracing the earth. And his ecstasy was respected. No word of reproach for lying not in bed, but on the carpet; he had been carefully covered with the bedspread, which had still been on the

bed, so that he would not freeze on the carpet beside the bed. ICH UMARME DIE ERDE, he was blissfully happy . . . The white telephone was ringing. He hesitated, but then lifted the receiver to stop the ringing. He did not speak any more softly than usual, but spoke more shortly. In German. A date for tomorrow. After putting down the receiver he looked at her, seeing her pale throat, the gently determined set of her chin, her ear; she had her hair combed back. Her lips had meanwhile come slightly apart. She had looked tired when she arrived. It is a tiring city, as one knows. Once she passed a hand through her loose hair, without moving her head. It looked odd: which belonged to her person—the hand or the head? Then this hand was back lying on her trousers. Not blue jeans today. Her legs are slim. He looked at his watch. Time had not stood still, but it was now a different sort of time. He sat without filling his pipe and looked at various objects: his little typewriter, OLIVETTI LETTERA, the yellow lamp, a plastic bowl, her green cigarette lighter, her purse on the floor beside the chair; once, through the open window, the house front opposite, BROWN-STONE, the water tanks on the roofs, black against the yellow sky. A fine evening. He looked at her living feet. Before starting, she had taken off her shoes; being barefoot was apparently a part of it all. Her feet, her hands, her forehead, her ear. All motionless. But she was alive, she was breathing. A living body. As far as he was concerned, this might go on for a long time. When she at last opened her eyes, not seeming in the least irritated by someone's being in the room, and silently put on her shoes, he looked at his watch, but in a way that Lynn should not notice. Twenty minutes exactly—almost exactly. Where shall we go to eat? She wanted to smoke a cigarette first. I AM HUNGRY, she said, but did not pick up her purse from the floor. Then she felt she must go to the bathroom. He waited with the room key in his hand. He was glad. He had canceled an invitation, an interesting one, in order to be alone for once, and now he was glad of Lynn's company. As she came from the bathroom he reminded her of her

purse. I'LL TAKE IT LATER, she said. Her purse stayed behind in the hotel room.

I LIKE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR

In company (P.E.N. CLUB) she can laugh in the expected way. HOW FUNNY, she says, though she finds the people awful. Alone with him, she laughs when he is not expecting it. Her laugh is rather shrill. One cannot set out deliberately to make her laugh. She can also withhold her laughter. When she laughs, it is the laughter of surprise. That alters her face for a moment. At such times he is not usually conscious of having been especially witty, but it is not witticisms she is laughing at. She never laughs for long, but afterward for a while her face and eyes retain their open expression.

YOU HAVE AN OPEN FACE

Neither of them has said:

I LOVE YOU

(One is told that there is nothing new to be said about love between the sexes. Literature has portrayed it countless times in all its variations, it is no longer a valid theme—at least for literature worthy of the name. One often reads statements to this effect—but they overlook the fact that the relationship between the sexes alters, that there will be love stories of another sort.)

WOMEN'S LIBERATION:

He is very much in favor of it, he says, there is no social problem more urgent. Has he ever lived with an emancipated woman? Lynn does not ask this question, and he regrets having raised it himself. Now Lynn wants to know as he pours out the tea. An

emancipated woman? They are eating with chopsticks, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. The two chopsticks grip the light, dry rice, but the bamboo shoots are slippery, and then one loses not only the bamboo shoots, but the thread of the conversation as well . . .

DER GUTE GOTT VON MANHATTAN

I was in Hamburg doing something for the radio station, and I got them to play me a tape of her radio play about the good god of Manhattan. Then I wrote a letter to the young author, whom I did not know, telling her how vital and how good it was that Woman, the other side, should express herself. I knew she was used to praise, much praise, but all the same I felt an urge to write. I wanted to tell her that we need to see men depicted by women, through the self-description of a woman. Her answering letter puzzled me. She was going to Paris and would travel via Zurich, she said, but she had only four or five days to spare. What did she mean by that? She did not in fact come at all. I had written to her through her publishers and knew her address neither in Munich nor in Paris. When, later, I myself was in Paris, she read about it in the newspapers and found out where I was staying, HOTEL DU LOUVRE. She came, dressed to sit in a box, to see a performance of my play at the THEATRE DES NATIONS. I was happy as we sat drinking a Pernod in the café outside the theater, and I said: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO SEE IT. She was looking for something in her purse, her attention distracted because she could not find it, and she did not hear me. It was not a box I had, but two seats in the dress circle. Why had I said that? It was my first opening night in Paris, the actors were expecting me, I had thought the production very good, my play not bad, yet when the time came, I said it again: INGEBORG BACHMANN, YOU REALLY DO NOT HAVE TO SEE IT. So instead of going to the theater, we went to our first dinner together. I knew nothing at all about her life,

not even rumors. ARE YOU LIVING WITH A CHILD? was the first thing I asked her. She was pleased, surprised, delighted to find somebody who obviously knew absolutely nothing at all about her.

MONTAUK

On the drive here yesterday they had spoken little, Lynn at the wheel, he busy with the road map. YOU HAVE TO NAVIGATE—he found the expression amusing. The weekend before had been sunny, but now it had begun to rain. Lynn had managed to leave the office at three o'clock. Out on the Atlantic, they told each other, the weather may be completely different. The weather was important. If it did not rain, they could go walking, and the night together would not seem like their only purpose. SUNRISE HIGHWAY. From now on there is no danger of losing the way, and so one can talk. Often he is too late: Lynn already has her lighter in her hand. She asks him: DO YOU SNORE? The road surface is now dry; it has not been raining at all here. They are both relieved, but it does not start them talking. Chancellor Willy Brandt's resignation—not a theme to spread over many miles . . . A few days ago, after midnight, I could not resist ringing up Christa Wolf in Oberlin, Ohio: What is your government trying to achieve? No, Christa, I know you can't do anything about it—no, Christa, I know—I beg your pardon . . . On both sides of the road heathland, dreary, with buildings here and there, an anthology of appalling non-architecture. He is glad that they still have several miles to go. What could one do here? He tells Lynn she is a good driver. Is he always such a good passenger? she asks. At one point she turns her head (no danger on this straight and empty road) to look at him. I DO NOT KNOW YOU AT ALL, she says, and asks this stranger sitting beside her what vices he has. ARE YOU A SADIST? Shortly after that they see for the first time a sign: MONTAUK. At this moment he feels fairly sure the trip will be a failure, and he would prefer to be back in New York.

He had taken care of the road map, Lynn of everything else: NATIONAL CAR RENTAL, GURNEY'S INN, reservation with telegraphed deposit. He is able to comply with her wish not to be standing beside him as he enters her in the hotel register under his own name. She remains sitting in the car, combing her hair. It reminds him of former times. She too obviously knows all about it and does not like it either. She still keeps silent as a porter collects the two small cases from the car. Her English and his English do not belong under a single name. In the room he says OKAY without a glance, at the same time tipping the porter, who wants to show them the bathroom. Lynn does not break her silence until the porter has gone. WELL, she says, but does not remove her shaggy coat. They are both of them more constrained than in her apartment. He busies himself with the Venetian blinds. A room with a balcony and a view over the nearby sea. Two beds, separated by a bedside table with a lamp on it. They immediately go out onto the balcony. Far out over the Atlantic there is even a glimmer of sun. Lynn suggests a walk, and he willingly agrees; but before they go, she wants to wash her hands.

The hotel also has a ping-pong table.

Lynn knows this wood-frame hotel from an outing with her firm. A hotel in the sand dunes. It had been summertime then. When the weather is right for swimming, the place is overrun. Now it is still too cold, but they can always go walking—that is, if it doesn't rain tomorrow—

Does he know what they are talking about at the moment?

Lynn will not get to know what his vice is. There will not be time for that. It needs a marriage, a long one, to reveal it . . . I did not turn her into a maidservant (I occasionally washed the dishes, carried out the trash cans, did the shopping, etc.) and I

have never struck the woman I love. Her complaint is a different one, and it is deserved. It took me a year to see it. At first I thought her verdict grotesque: it was that in ten years I had done nothing to help her develop her potentialities. I lavished every attention on her: the easiest way of treating a woman, and the worst. I can see that. Her reproach strikes home, but not in the way she meant it. Obviously, I have been acting from the very start as if I were God Almighty, or at least Adam, from whose rib Woman was made: COME, FOLLOW, AND I WILL LEAD! This woman is not ungrateful, but desperate. What I had imagined to be our years of happiness suddenly seem like lost years. My vice: MALE CHAUVINISM. What else but my attitude, maintained day after day from the very beginning, could have made a sensible woman believe that the development of her potentialities was a matter for her husband—for men at all?

MY DEFECTS WILL HERE BE READ

Miles of beach, no end in view, evaporating in both directions into a pink milky light. In spite of the wind it is almost hot. On the sand there are two deck chairs with faded cushions, not another far and wide. Whose are they? Not another human being in sight. They take possession of the two chairs just as they are: standing more or less parallel, separated by rather more than an arm's length. Before doing this they had rolled up their trousers and paddled in the water. For a while at least it was quite bearable. The breaking waves would have whipped their bodies, but they had no swimsuits, and so they are now lying back in the two deck chairs, separated by rather more than an arm's length, with a view of the dark Atlantic and two pairs of naked feet. The sand has now stopped clinging to their skin, the wind just blows it away . . . On the drive here yesterday, as they passed the interminable cemetery in Queens, she had asked: DO YOU WANT TO BE BURIED OR CREMATED? They were both emphatically of the same

opinion . . . The coast here is different from Brittany a year ago, the sea like everywhere. Now there are a few white clouds. They are reflected in the pools thrown up by the breaking waves, then the pools seep away and the sand turns gray, until the next tongue of foam comes along, when once again there is a moment of gleaming.

A long, easy afternoon.

HERMES GEHT VORBEI

The title of an opera I once wanted to write: a couple taking refuge in a museum, a group of sightseers with a guide who describes the statue in expert terms. Nobody notices that the statue is no longer there; Hermes has come down from his pedestal to take charge of the couple—a comedy of many errors . . . Tomorrow will be Sunday already, Lynn must be back in town by evening, in the office on Monday, and on Tuesday he will fly off to Europe.

HI, she says, WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

He keeps it to himself: how one night I went walking in my pajamas through Friedenau; no one to see me, just street lights in the rain, the raindrops visible in the lamplight, a single car, which did not stop. I was walking barefoot along the sidewalk in my pajamas, but it was February in Berlin, cold. Wet paving stones, dripping wet pajamas. I did not get far, for I found myself shivering instead of feeling ashamed . . .

He gets up and goes to the water's edge, rolling his trousers up farther, as far as they will go, and stands in the water, enjoying it. Much as he would like to fling off all his clothes and run into the surf, he does not dare; his body is not handsome enough for that.

He finds a piece of wood and throws it out, far out. He is happy when he does not know what he is thinking about and when the spray, the shallow frothing water, the sand, remind him of nobody at all. It is just the present moment he wants, nothing more. He picks up the piece of wood, which has been washed back to the shore, and throws it far out again. He just wants to watch. Out to sea there is a little Coast Guard boat. It is only three o'clock; plenty of time. The water feels cold as it streams around his legs, and once he almost loses his balance. The piece of wood has been washed up again, but this time he leaves it where it is. The water makes little rivulets in the sand, here and there a shell. He feels content. Returning to the two deck chairs, he shows Lynn a shell, one like a thousand others. She is lying back in her chair; her body, which he knows, hidden under clothes. He feels the need to remain on his feet.

Lynn will never get to know his hysteria.

One evening in Berlin, when I could not convince them (in recent years the usual thing), and when I could no longer bear being interrupted after every word I spoke, and when I realized that I was not convincing even myself, I went into the kitchen and got the trash basket. I sat down again at the table, placed the basket on my head, and said: Keep on talking—don't mind me.

She is lying back in the deck chair, having creamed first her face and then her neck before putting on her dark glasses again. I AM SLEEPY, she says, since he is not telling her his thoughts. But of course she doesn't sleep. The light is much too bright. Knocking out his pipe, he thinks: scratch your pipe out, knock it again and then blow (perhaps sand has got into it), then, instead of speaking with the pipe in your hand, put it empty between your teeth till you have found your tobacco, then fill the pipe with deliberation, using your right thumb. This will fill up moments, moments

without memories, and then, when that is done, put the filled pipe in your mouth so that, though not impossible, it would be impolite to speak. Now gaze out to sea as you light a match, then a second and a third, for it is windy at the seaside, and draw on the pipe, once short and then long, till you are back to where you are, utterly. At the moment there are only the two of them, sitting in two deck chairs which they have not moved, since they belong to someone else. At some point a roaming dog passes by. Lynn is reading: office papers, since she left yesterday before three; but there are moments now and again when she is not reading. Just now she is combing her hair, an impossible task in this wind, nice to watch. A red sports plane appears briefly and flies low along the whole stretch of beach as if about to land, then vanishes from sight. He begins to talk about Mykonos, the Greek island, with its white houses and white windmills. About the little motorboat that took us to Delos and how it bounced on the waves, how the water came splashing in, and so on. All that he tells. But whom was it taking to Delos? Not a word about a woman who now lives virtually alone. Not a word about six years without quarrels, without jealousy, without attrition; they had never lived together. Mykonos—no, Lynn will not get there this summer . . . Then for a while he talks about Rome, the city, and what he saw and heard in Rome over five years. Lynn feels that Rome must be beautiful. He does not talk about the most terrible of all ways of dying.

Now Lynn wants to stretch her legs.

He stays where he is.

Living in the present until Tuesday.

Her naked body is more girlish than her face. When she knew that her breasts were about to be seen for the first time, she closed

her eyes and said: THEY ARE VERY SMALL. That was on the evening she had to return to the hotel to get her purse. WE CAN'T MAKE LOVE, she said, NOT TONIGHT. A technical reason. How she made up her bed, after first stripping the couch: some experience with men, though presumably not with many. She took off her dress, her underclothes, without haste. As if to prove that she was not being seduced. She removed the pins from her hair, sitting there as if she were alone, as if she were just going to bed as usual. She did not now need a cigarette just because she was naked; she was used to her nakedness. But she was silent as she combed out her hair, then shook it as it hung loose—presumably something she always does. There was no curtain to be drawn—not necessary in this barred two-window apartment with a view of a nearby wall. What about the light? She did not look at the strange man who did not know where to switch off the light in the kitchenette, but she told him. He was hoping not to fall into some sort of role, now that their conversation had become quite open. Her body was clear to see, for it was fairly light, a glow over the city; her face also clear to see, but it was a different face. Again he could not find an English word. YOUR ENGLISH IS EXCELLENT, she said, meaning that even in his own language no more can be said when two bodies are waiting for each other. JUST RELAX, she said. Every first time with a woman is the first time all over again. Wonder without memory. Afterward Lynn remained naked, standing in her kitchen, while he, the clothed guest, sat at the table and talked, now happy with a foreign language which gave him the feeling of saying everything for the first time. They ate strawberries as he did so. He had not had the feeling of knowing Lynn after these few days and evenings—Lynn as Undine with a touch of nurse. Now it seemed to him that Hermes had replaced her; she was another person with the same hair, just Undine, even when talking of her puritan upbringing. Unfortunately it was a Monday, and she had to get a few hours' sleep. The washing-up must be done in the evening. He helped; he could not

sit at the table watching a naked woman busy at the sink. She did not take it for granted that he should dry the dishes. The kitchenette was too cramped for two persons whose bodies should not touch. It could be managed, but it stopped his talking. Where do the glasses go? Where this knife? She did not want to tell him, but thanked him with kisses. It would have seemed too familiar if he had known where everything belonged.

A long, easy afternoon:

Lynn's shoes in the sand. She is still stretching her legs and is now far away, her figure hardly recognizable since there in the place she is walking the sea is glittering beneath the sun, blinding him. She seems to be coming in this direction. Eventually she becomes more distinct. She is running in curves, as in a slalom, presumably running around the waves as they wash up over the sand and once, as she does so, she flings up her arms. In joy.

DEJA VU:

9/22/62 on the Mediterranean. How you were wearing your hair: the whole of it combed on top of your head, your ears free, your neck bare and girlish, and when you removed the clasp—so much loose hair, black.

He stays in his chair.

On the crowded daytime streets or in the elevator, where one sees people close up, he cannot always help comparing Lynn with other members of the female sex, comparing her hair with other hair, comparing his suddenly so vague recollection of her face with other faces. As if he were Paris, making his judgment! He does not stare, but his gaze is precise: her hair, the way it grows behind the ears, her chin, neck, lips, nose, the whole figure, the

way of walking. He is looking to see whether his tender feelings are really directed at Lynn . . . Or am I deceiving us both? . . . He stays in his chair and looks nowhere in particular. He has a paperback in his hand, but he does not open it. The thudding and hissing of the waves would not disturb him if he were to read. Nor would the little sports plane, now flying back across the long, empty beach, nor a dog. One can also look up from a book and say to oneself: afternoon on the Atlantic, it is now exactly 4:35 P.M. Literature cancels the moment—that is what it is for. Literature has another time, and in addition a theme which is relevant to all or to many—which cannot be said of her two shoes lying there in the sand . . .

TO BE ALIVE: TO BE IN THE LIGHT. DRIVING DONKEYS AROUND SOMEWHERE (LIKE THAT OLD MAN IN CORINTH)—THAT'S ALL OUR JOB AMOUNTS TO! THE MAIN THING IS TO STAND UP TO THE LIGHT, TO JOY IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT I SHALL BE EXTINGUISHED IN THE LIGHT OVER GORSE, ASPHALT, AND SEA, TO STAND UP TO TIME, OR RATHER TO ETERNITY IN THE INSTANT. TO BE ETERNAL MEANS TO HAVE EXISTED.

Living in quotations.

When the skin feels how the sand dries on it, how the sun, how the wind, how all this is for the skin and the brain . . . He is not forgetting his role, or the immediate obligations that arise from this role; the appointments; he is not even forgetting the world situation. There are all sorts of things he does not forget in this thin current moment.

MONTE ALBAN:

A wide, bare mountain valley in Mexico, violet in the evening light. In the middle of the valley a hill, a natural throne; on top of it the Acropolis of the Zapotecs, a strictly geometrical temple,

large and extensive, a playing field with high walls for the sacred ball game. The winner must die, for in the ball game the gods reveal whom they have chosen, and so he, the victor, is sacrificed to the gods. That, at any rate, is what the little book I am now reading maintains. It is terrifying, but convincing. Other things delight without terrifying: that the Mayas (if what the book says is true) from time to time smashed up all their crockery to replace it with new daily utensils; that they had, on their priests' command, to abandon their temples, to move on and start again in the jungle (YUCATAN, GUATEMALA). They did not have to destroy their old temples before making a new start; they simply left them to the jungle (PALENQUE) and to the natural processes of decay . . . Maybe the things that delight me are not even true . . . MONTE ALBAN: here on a wall sits Marianne, born 1939, student of philology, startled by what I am asking. I believe I have the courage to know when I shall become too old for her. In two years? Three years? She hesitates, wisely. She comes to Rome and hesitates for a whole summer. Later, a house in the country, a small apartment in Zurich together, then another, a larger one; journeys together. It goes on for nine years—longer than they ever thought it would.

I HAVE NOT BEEN LIVING WITH YOU TO PROVIDE LITERARY MATERIAL. I FORBID YOU TO WRITE ABOUT ME.

When he sees her trudging through the loose dry sand above the water line, moving more slowly and laboriously because of it, somewhat exhausted after her long run, swinging her arms because her legs have now lost their swing, he watches her with pleasure; as too the way she sometimes lurches forward as a foot sinks in deep, then throws her hair back over one shoulder or the other. She is no doubt conscious of his approving gaze; she looks away. As she now lies beside him in her chair, his thoughts also stray. When she mounts the wooden steps to the hotel, he does

not look at her; he can imagine how she is swinging her arms, her gracefulness slightly comic. He can even forget her; for example, when he is with other people. He watches her with pleasure when she eats, with a lean person's uneager appetite. When she is not there, he can only vaguely remember the sound of her laughter; when next she laughs, he hears it with pleasure. Seeing her in the city, before she has recognized him and is crossing the street, a pedestrian among many others, he notes how she moves her thin arms, how she hesitates, how she threads her way through the crowds, how she moves her head and so on. He is not in love. He is just pleased. When she comes down the wooden steps from the hotel, he does not think of the coming night. When she skips on the steps, then almost stumbles (if it were not for the wooden railing with which she saves herself in time), he watches her with pleasure.

A long, easy afternoon.

It's time he remembered: Lynn was born in Florida, not California. She went to college in California. The short-lived marriage took place in Sydney. She throws sand when he asks a question that he ought not to have had to ask a second time. Lynn does not know where her divorced husband is now living. She is still throwing sand; not at him; just round about. Her future? She will marry again one day, Lynn thinks, but this time she will be warier. She will have a child maybe, just one . . . She does not say much, nor does he, but they are talking:

DO YOU BELIEVE

WHAT DO YOU THINK

about Richard Nixon, for instance? He ought to be brought to trial, Lynn thinks. It is windy, and perhaps that is the reason she

never sticks for long to one topic. The wind has filled her shoes with sand. I do not know how he arrived at Baudelaire. Lynn has not read FLEURS DU MAL. To answer her question: No, I have never published any poems. They keep to general topics. Drugs? Lynn has no great experience of these either. His English is modest—I, of course, know every time what he would like to say. When he happens not to translate, but to say in English what could not be similarly expressed in written or spoken German, I am surprised by what he thinks, or how he thinks it. I enjoy that: the foreign language exposing what his real opinion is. He suddenly laughs at things he does not usually laugh about. Lynn is not finding him boring, it seems. For example, he says that I have never in my life been inside a brothel. He adds: That's why I am not a political person, because I *verinnerliche* everything. *Verinnerlichen?* He does not know the English term and has to describe it in other words: to take everything personally to heart. Lynn does not see the connection, but what he says convinces me. SEXUALITY, as Lynn calls it, is a topic of general conversation over here. They exchange their views, and I am surprised by his. His mother, when he was already fifty-five, told him with a certain asperity: You shouldn't write so much about women, for you do not understand them. He does not mention that. Lynn does not know Switzerland. That saves him from talking about things that bore me. What does he think of psychiatrists? He can't really claim to have known C. G. Jung personally; he only attended his lectures. As Lynn can work out for herself, that must have been quite some time ago. He really ought not to have spoken about it. At college Lynn won prizes for spear-throwing, and in Sydney she had ridden horses. His firm belief that Allende had been overthrown in Chile with American help is something he can assert, but not prove. Communism and capitalism; his tortuous attempt to explain the difference between the Soviet Union and socialism—

And so on.

Perhaps because he and Lynn have only the English language in common, and out of laziness he tends to leave unstated things he would otherwise have said, matters occur to him, when he is with her, which ordinarily—if he could express them—would not occur to him to say. There is a difference between being silent in a foreign language and in one's own. In being silent in a foreign language I suppress less, my memory lets more through . . . Twice in my life I have been present at a birth; my wife wished it. I have never written about that. My wife did not want it to be written about. And I believe I have never even spoken about it. I just see it. It was a long time ago.

Things he has never described:

Four abortions, involving three women I loved. In three instances without a doubt that it was the right thing to do. But never without feelings of horror. The role of the man who has to pay the doctor's bill. Once it was because I was married, and she wanted to marry a friend of mine. Once it was for a different reason: it came too late in our life together. We remained friends. Once it was a mistake: a fault, I thought later—my fault. I did not have the courage to demand a child. Seeing her so unhesitating (though apprehensive, naturally enough), I was dismayed, but all I did was ask once more: You really do not want it? She knew I had no intention of leaving her. As a young man I did not really desire children; the simple news that a child had been conceived gladdened me for the woman's sake. In later years things changed, but I did not express my wishes clearly enough: I did not dare, seeing her so unhesitating. So I found myself standing one night in a dark street, after I had asked yet again, and waiting in pity. Anything else, I thought, would have been blackmail. That too was long ago. In this case, blackmail might have been better. The other time the doctor advised it—against our wishes.

asks Lynn, since he is claiming that clouds like these don't mean a thing and tomorrow (Sunday) the sky will be blue again. They are sitting in the two deck chairs placed rather more than an arm's length apart, and they have not moved them. Who had put them there—two deck chairs somewhere on an empty beach miles long? Only one person could have done it: HERMES. He is glad Lynn is there. It would be very empty here without this strange young woman—just sea and a landscape of sand dunes and wind. He would not be able to sit still for long, he would have to keep walking. Without a goal in sight. It would just be sand as on Sylt (1949), blue sea as at Sperlonga (1962), and memories. Even when he is not looking at Lynn, her body in the other chair creates a present moment. She does not know what he is thinking, he does not know what she is thinking. He has no urge to touch her body. He would rather draw it, if he could. (I can draw a little, but I haven't done so for a long time. It vexes me that all I turn out is imitations, and weak ones; by drawing it, I lose what I have seen.) Head back, face turned away, blouse slightly open, hands resting on her trousered lap, knees drawn up, she has abandoned herself to the sun. On her legs and feet the skin is pale. He sits upright, his feet in the sand, and most of the time just watches the afternoon sea. A dull thudding on the beach, followed by a hiss. She is not asleep. Too much wind. Now she has raised her head, she is looking at something. When she notices him watching her, she laughs.

MY LIFE AS A MAN:

When—in the foyer of a concert hall, for instance—I happen to catch sight of the mother of my children, I always feel disconcerted. Her face, shy with a trace of sadness (which it always had), is a good face, even more open in her later years, but forever

a face of dismayed innocence. I look at her with respect, astonished that I am the father of her three children.

FOR YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM

My mother, aged eighty-eight, in Rome, wanting to see everything there was to see. It was her first visit to Rome, and she was indefatigable. Day by day she wrote down what she had seen; her notebook ends with the sentence: ROM, ES WAR EINE GOTTVOLLE ZEIT!—Rome, it was a heavenly time—written in old-style handwriting. Three years later, in a municipal old people's home, she wanted to die; wanted to—she was cross about all the injections the doctors gave her. In the same room were three other women who often, when one entered, looked as if they were dying. Mouths open, but no labored breathing—in fact, no movement at all. Sometimes she became muddled (as when I came to her from Odessa, where in 1901, as a young girl, she had picked capers), but then she became clear-headed again: I am dying now, she said, and I thank you all. But it took another six months. The doctor, when I informed him of my mother's wish, told me the reason for the injections: without them it would be a painful death of suffocation. One day when I came to visit I found her on her deathbed. For three days and nights we took turns sitting beside her, my brother and I and our sister, who was not my mother's child. Now and again one could converse with her. Her main concern was whether anyone was keeping my jackets in order. She was also worried that these visits were taking up a lot of our time. I had never before watched a person die. At times it looked as if she were already dead. When we talked to her, she was surprised to find us still there. A clergyman was on call. I remember how vexed she had been by a speech he had made at Christmas, when apparently he had said: Let us hope that we shall all spend next Christmas together. In view of the fact that people often change their minds in their last hours, I asked her whether she would like

to see the clergyman. She was fully awake, she understood the question, considered it, and then said: What for? Once, taking leave of her, I said: You are a beautiful woman. She did not find this declaration out of place and asked why we did not take her photograph. Not even the doctor noticed any change in her condition, and so I once skipped my evening visit. A colleague was reading passages from his new novel in the Zunfthaus zur Meise in Zurich, and I had to introduce him with a few friendly words. Hardly a difficult assignment, but I was consumed with stage fright, and the evening ended in a fraternity booze. Next morning, when I read the telegram, I was in no state to show myself to a dead woman . . .

HAPPY

that is exactly the word:

FUN

seeing just what happens to be there:

MONTAUK BEACH

I have never made a serious attempt to put an end to my life. No unserious one either. I have just often—at all ages—thought of it. I have an expert's eye for the practical possibilities. I see a girder that would do. In a high-rise building it occurs to me, as to almost everybody else, that this would be a simple and certain way. I do not keep a revolver in my house, since I do not always consider my actions, and the act of suicide should be a considered one. I have explored a mountain road with this in mind, and I know at least three places not provided with a railing which might unexpectedly hold firm—here, particularly in fog, it could be made to

look like an accident. The readiness is not infrequent, a sober readiness unconnected with any particular cause.

LYNN:

She has been talking about her work in the office and he has been listening—not absent-mindedly, no, of course not. If there is something he does not understand, he usually asks. He can understand her more easily if he watches her lips. She has been reading a book about dolphins. Lynn knows more about dolphins than he does. Then, all of a sudden, they once more do not know what to talk about. This being together all day: not boring, but then I am seeing them both from the outside; they will never get to know each other . . . It is still the coast, the sea closer now perhaps than a couple of hours ago, but the waves neither larger nor smaller. The sun is still high above the horizon, but it is pleasant now, no longer so hot. The water beyond the white foam of the waves, which are breaking just before they reach the beach, now looks like ink, blue-black. The constant sound of the surf. Hands clasped behind his neck to raise his head a little, to see the sharp horizon, he is not silent, just keeping silent about what is happening to him. There is no tragedy. It is all understandable, self-evident even. And right. And he had foreseen it all; everyone had foreseen it. All that now remains is for him to accept it. Without complaint. And that one can do, sitting there with hands clasped behind the neck in order to raise one's head a little—

Whom is Lynn thinking of?

Recently she lost her gold chain. Luckily, the black chambermaids in that hotel do not sweep under the beds. There is nothing about the chain to show why it is irreplaceable. When he found it—not in the closet, not on the table, not on the yellow sofa—he im-

mediately phoned her office. Her sigh of relief in the receiver. That would not have been the place to lose this particular chain . . . At dinner Lynn appears in a different dress, which he finds less convincing; and with it once again the narrow-rimmed spectacles. Her hair done up. The waitress, not acknowledging his greeting, pours water with lumps of ice into their glasses. The people around them are high wage-earners in shirtsleeves. Very few young people (TOO EXPENSIVE, Lynn says). Instead, many settled couples who hardly exchange a word, and families, as loud as if they were at home. Sunset for all. A wedding reception. Lynn and he can also relapse into silence for a while. The number of people they both know is small, so there is little fear of gossip. There is lobster on the menu. How to deal with the claws? Lynn thinks he can show her: she overestimates him. Something about his person is worrying her, he can see that. But when (before the wine arrives) he begins to talk, she assumes he might say something interesting and does not interrupt him in the middle of his first sentence. He sips the wine and nods. This is something he does know about. He does not notice whether she is in fact interrupting him, or how often. She has cracked the first claw of her lobster, is doing better than he. When she asks him what he means, she does not seem to be excluding the possibility that a lengthy explanation (in his English) might persuade her. He is saying things that surprise him. This raises his spirits. He is also relieved to find how amenable he can be. They drink very little, incidentally. Lynn is prodding about in her lobster, but not so as not to have to listen to him. Naturally she is not interested in everything that comes into his mind (architecture, for instance). There is not so much in a lobster as one at first thinks. The red shell on the plate looks good. Lynn would like a dessert. When there is agreement between them, it has a shining look; it does not smell like a sour and sensible compromise; one can go on talking even after agreement is reached. The young waitress, a college girl presumably, serves the dessert as if they were a special

couple, as if she were taking part in some kind of celebration. No tendernesses at table: they are just a couple without that air of concealed antipathy, without those quick glances which the partner is not supposed to see when they meet him from the side, those glances when it is no longer a secret to either how closely they are bound and how little pleasure it gives them.

CENTRAL PARK

a week ago today. They did not lie entwined on the grass like the other couples, but sat upright. If Lynn had not been obliged to work, they could have driven out to the coast. Lynn knew a nice place: Montauk. Her easy assurance that it would be nice on the coast gave him the courage to make his proposal for the following weekend, his last here. Nothing was promised—it was just considered. He remained sitting while Lynn lay back on the grass beside him. She was grumbling at her firm because, although it was a Sunday, she had to work. A sunny Sunday, the park full of brightly dressed people—no hippies this time. When they got up to go—for it was time for Lynn—it was she who put her arm in his. Together, arm in arm, they watched a black sea lion glistening and rolling armless on its sun-drenched artificial rock. A smell of burned pretzels, on sale nearby. Walking on, they saw boys playing baseball, many blacks among them, an occasional father flying a gaily colored kite for his children, the metal boats on the little lake between the black rocks of Manhattan . . . Two years ago (at exactly this time of year, though then the branches were greener) I posed here for German television. The cameramen, out to catch my uninhibited personality, were delighted when Jakov Lind made me laugh. Marianne did not want to appear in the picture, and when the cameraman tried to trick her into it, I stopped him. I could understand Marianne's not wanting to be in the picture. It dealt (as always) with the writer's responsibility toward society.

Women: sometimes I believe I understand them, and at the outset they are pleased with my inventions, with my sketch of their character; or at any rate they are surprised when I see in them something my predecessors had not seen. In this way I win them over entirely. WITH NO OTHER MAN HAVE I BEEN ABLE TO TALK AS I CAN WITH YOU—how often have I heard that at parting! Everyone can make use of flattery, but I do not need to. They already feel flattered when they see the efforts I am making to fathom them. And for a while they are convinced by what I am imagining about them; I do not see them simply, but as full of contradictions. NOBODY HAS EVER TOLD ME THAT BEFORE, they say, BUT PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT. There is something compelling about my sketch. As about any oracle. I am eventually astonished myself by the way their behavior confirms my speculations. Naturally, I do not produce the same model for every woman. I cannot rest until I know whom I love, and I take care to avoid transferring experiences I had with one partner to the next. If inadvertently, in spite of all my care, I do so, then I know I am in the wrong. If similar behavior patterns emerge—and they often do, to a hair—it must be due to something in myself. But not, I believe, to any lack of imagination; for each partner I invent a new difficulty in relation to myself—for instance, that she is the stronger character, or, alternatively, that I am. The women themselves act accordingly, at any rate when I am present. If I see them in a state of suffering, I will tell them what is making them suffer—or, even if I don't tell them, I believe that I know. Thanks to my delusions. These never desert me. Everything that fits my model seems to me to be the result of observation. I have seen it, haven't I? I have heard it. And if I don't happen to be there, I can visualize more or less how it will be. I have to visualize it—not more or less, but exactly. Of course, I have my doubts whether my exact visualization is correct. THAT IS YOUR INTERPRETATION, the women say; they

themselves require none. It does not matter whether the illusions I weave around the women I love torture me or enchant me—all I want is that they should convince me. It is not the women who make a fool of me. I do that myself.

MAX, DID YOU LOVE YOUR MOTHER?

Yes.

YOU DIDN'T LIKE YOUR FATHER?

A shrug.

WHY NOT?

He had never really thought about it.

ARE YOU VERY FOND OF YOUR CHILDREN?

They are no longer children, but adults, though of course as adults different from other adults; they find it difficult to forget he is their father, and he doesn't really know how one sets about being the father of adults . . . Obviously Lynn finds this wedding party irritating:

DID YOU HAVE A WEDDING LIKE THAT?

Not the second time, no . . . CASA COMUNALE, which also housed the village schoolroom. IL SINDACO was a paperhanger by trade, and he read out the simple marriage oath, carefully written down in his own handwriting. Witnesses from the realms of art and literature, seven friends in all. A rough table at which they both wrote their signatures without fuss. AUGURI, AUGURI, AUGURI, AUGURI. Then we all went to our house (which had been our house

for the past three years) for a drink with people from the village.

MAX, ARE YOU JEALOUS?

Her question over dessert. It is now Saturday and his flight is on Tuesday, but Lynn is still trying to find out his vices. Incidentally, they have already agreed not to write to each other, beyond a picture postcard on 5/11/75, assuming they don't both forget. So her question sounds like something from a questionnaire:

ARE YOU JEALOUS? IN CASE YOU ARE:
COULD YOU KILL A PERSON? AND IF SO: HER OR HIM?
AND IF NOT—

He has already written a great deal about jealousy. For that very reason he has in recent years sternly forbidden himself any feelings of jealousy. It would not be a new experience for him if he were again to give way to jealousy; as a writer, he would have nothing to say about it, nothing new. He is bored with what he has already written on the theme—that story of the flesh-colored dress material in Venice and so on. It is true that he is a writer without very much imagination. That is why he cannot afford certain emotions, for fear of using them yet again as the emotions of a fictional character. That is one of the advantages of writing (of this kind) for the writer himself as a person: in order to remain a writer, he has to treat things that recur in his life in a different way each time . . . The ping-pong table is free this evening, so Lynn has after all to take off her shaggy coat, eventually even to roll up the sleeves of her blouse; he has the advantage of having a ping-pong table in his home, on the other side of the Atlantic. Lynn is quicker, but she does not slice the ball, and is annoyed when she misses a ball that is sliced; her annoyance helps him. All the same, they are pleased that it is a genuine

contest. The tick-tack of the balls sounds cheerful in the bare room. He succeeds almost every time in doing something he seldom brings off at home: hitting back the long incoming balls as they are falling, usually from below the level of the table. This gives him more time and also enables him to rescue points, even though he is fatter and less agile than she. Of course, if she places the ball just over the net she gets him every time, but since his balls land pretty sharply, she can't very often do that. His white shirt, the better of the two he brought with him for this short weekend, is already drenched with sweat. That comes from bending down to recover balls that have rolled under a chest. Lynn had not reckoned on losing the first game, then the second. But the match is still undecided. Before continuing, she has to knot up her hair, and she puts her blue paddle down on the table to have both hands free. They are both silent as she knots it . . . He was said often to have spoken as if he knew what was going on. He did not ask: Where have you been? She squeezed his orange juice before leaving the house. He knew she was fond of him, and he resisted the temptation to make inquiries: he loved her. Now and again he made a joke, to prevent himself from taking his suspicions seriously; he was making things comfortable for himself. This made the daily deceptions easier: there was little need for lies when silence would do. In fact, he knew the other man and admired him greatly. If this was love, he thought, he would be told of it sooner or later. In these days she was very happy, as anybody could see, including himself. But it was difficult for her, the way he kept coming up with plans for a journey together, pleading, in ignorance of the true situation. Why did he not ask straight out? She told herself that he did not want to know. He looked their friend in the eye and saw that their friend admired him—that was true too. Gradually he stopped suspecting entirely. That was his mistake; a man who does not notice that a woman has come to him from another bed is no truly amorous man. He

simply noticed that she showed little interest in his work. He accepted an invitation to lecture in Austin in order to show her a different America—Texas and New Orleans. She could not overcome her fear of flying, and so he went alone. The friend gave him addresses of some nice people in Texas. Again they were convinced that he knew, and they respected him for his civilized attitude. He did indeed return from his journey early, but not without due warning, and he was given a loving welcome. In the summer, back home in Europe, he shared her enthusiasm for New York, and his willingness to spend a second winter there made her happy. New York was important for her work, so she overcame her fear of flying and took off a month ahead of him, since he still had things to do in Europe. Her letters were lively, happy, and affectionate. It was not until shortly after his arrival that he heard of the Penelope incident. A man named Jack, whom he did not yet know, had tried to seduce her, almost rape her in fact, and she had had to call up friends to remove this Jack, who was drunk, from her room. He took an active interest in her work, but she needed other helpers, as he fully understood: his English was not good enough. They no longer met their friend and his young wife as two married couples: the wife had become difficult. What else did he notice? He noticed how infrequently he was able to persuade his wife, whatever the topic of conversation was. All the time she knew that he was living in ignorance of his true position, so how could she believe he was not equally wrong about everything else? The more self-assertive he became, the more often he turned out to be completely in the wrong. And he knew it. It was a bad winter. What fault of hers was it if he was so uncertain about his own work? He sat among guests (while she cooked), speaking of this and that in the presence of their silent friend, unaware that he would not have spoken thus if he had not been ignorant of the true position. Her sideways glance at him was not a reproach, as he thought; she was not hostile—only help-

less. He did not sound convincing to the others either, and it was not just his English that was at fault: he could not convince even himself. She wished him luck in Paris, and he had every reason to feel proud of having a production in the THEATRE NATIONAL DE L'ODEON, but instead he just felt dejected again about her claustrophobic fear of flying, which prevented her from accompanying him to Paris. He did not know what was the matter with him. A doctor, recommended by their friend, could find nothing wrong. Was he overestimating himself? He expected to be treated with respect and was making himself ridiculous by constantly assuming that nobody was taking him seriously. This was embarrassing for the friend as well, who liked him. On one occasion the friend suddenly rose to his feet, went to the door, and disappeared. He felt the need to make sure that no harm had come to their friend in the dark, deserted streets. It was then he discovered that in the meantime their friend had acquired another apartment, a small one, being unable to work in peace in the family apartment. And there the friend was, sitting on the bed. SORRY, he said, I'M DRUNK. That could happen to anyone. Another time, when he brought along a birthday cake with thirty-two candles and in front of everyone knelt down in mock cavalier fashion in front of his own wife—that was also not the moment for telling. She did that a year later (1973) while they were sitting talking at the stone table. It was not a confession, but a conversation about the development of a woman's potentialities. She mentioned it just in passing. He did not, as Crusoe did, stand like one thunderstruck, but went back to his work—business correspondence. It was a natural occurrence. There was not much one could say about it. It had been going on over a year. It was real love—they would like to live together. Why had they not been able to tell him? In the end he could understand even that. They could not have known that he would understand; he had given them no assurance that he, a man of sixty, would not on their account have shot, poisoned, or hanged himself . . .

Back to the game: Lynn has picked up her blue paddle, and they go on playing. What else is there to do here? It is evening, not yet ten o'clock. The breaking waves are floodlit. It will rain tomorrow.

Lynn wins, 5 to 3.

(Later, about a month after this ping-pong match, I did stand there like one thunderstruck, attacking Jörg, who had once, in 1972, rescued from complete mutilation a work on which I had spent six years. A true friend. I paced up and down in his room, I laughed, thinking of our intimate talks together man to man, while all the time he had known things about my marriage that I did not know. I beg your pardon! I take back the things I said in anger. But where to direct this anger now? And I was wrong: it was not she who had let him into the secret. A lot of people had been talking, and he, as a friend, had asked her whether I knew about it. I ought to understand her anguish. Did I really expect him, who had kept a bundle of love letters from America for her locked away here in this house, to have betrayed her confidence? All the same, I was dismayed, and I talked nastily and stupidly, in a way Jörg would never have expected from a man of sound mind. What did it matter to me how many people knew of my situation before I did? My dismay was over myself: what else but vanity had induced me to make a secret of it ever since I had known? Our secret. I was dismayed by my vanity. Why should my wife's lover not tell others the story of his relationship with her before I knew of it? It was his story.)

The bar is no place for talking: too loud, too gloomy. They have no desire for a drink. He is not tired—just hot from the game of ping-pong; a shower would be welcome. Everything has suddenly become fragile; the melancholy of a shared homelessness. One feels the need for an inspiration, but none comes. Lynn says:

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL DAY!

In a week's time the academy will be meeting in Berlin. What will Lynn be doing a week from now? His plans, her plans—nothing there to provide a conversation. They sit for a while on the balcony, Lynn in pajamas with her shaggy coat over them; close by, the waves are still sturdily pounding beneath the floodlights. They can only talk about general things.

DO YOU STILL FIND MARRIAGE A PROBLEM?

I remember a woman who scratched all her ten fingers bloody on the walls of the lavatory after I had told her of my adultery. The blood on the walls I noticed that same evening, her sore fingers only the next morning. I also remember a woman who leaned from her bed to ring her husband up at his office. From a phone booth, she said, while I listened in silence. An hour later we were all three dining together . . .

The topic does not encourage him to talk.

The breaking waves beneath the floodlights are not so loud that they cannot hear each other speak. All the same, they are both silent. The floodlighting does not in fact extend very far; it illuminates three lines of waves with shining crests, but behind these there is just black night. No lighthouse to be seen, no horizon. I AM FINE, says Lynn as they sit on the balcony, IT IS NOT COLD AT ALL. Still, she is glad of the shaggy jacket, which he held in his hands for the first time only recently, after that interview, and she is grateful for a white blanket too. Once they heard voices from a neighboring balcony—a reminder that they could be overheard. They watch the three wave crests (sometimes it is only two) advancing with their curling heads of foam out of the night. Lynn now without sunglasses. When she leans back in her

chair, her loosened hair reaches almost down to the slatted floor of the balcony. In the curve beneath the foam the advancing waves are green, pale green, and milky. The music from the bar has stopped. It is midnight. Sometimes there is a thud on the beach, making one forget what one was just thinking of. But most of the time it is just an even, rustling sound. Once there comes a series of four waves together. It would be a shame to sleep now, and they stay sitting there for a long time. YOU ARE WATCHING ME. When he touches her shoulders, when he presses down her hair and strokes it backward with flat hands to bare her forehead, as readable as the forehead of a person long known, or when he traces her red eyebrows with his finger, he feels no doubt that his caresses are meant for Lynn, the young stranger; his feelings are not taking her for another as he kisses her body till she draws him to her. Her hair on his face, her wide soft mouth, her eyes now narrowed—the sudden similarity of women in the moment of their desire. Afterward her head on his shoulder, the hardness of a skull. YOU ARE THINKING. One woman will be the last, and I wish it might be Lynn, our parting will be easy and good . . . At seven in the morning, as he stands outside on the balcony, it is not possible to tell from the sky whether it is going to be a rainy or a sunny day. He hopes he did not snore during the night. The slats beneath his bare feet are damp, rather slippery. He does not know what he is thinking; he is awake. Like the seagulls. The wooden railing on which he is resting his arms is also damp. He enjoys feeling chilly and thinking of nothing. He can feel his feet on the cold planks, his hands on the wooden railing; he can hear the seagulls, but he does not look at them. What there is to see he already knows. His body is letting him know that at this moment he is there. Sometimes he finds himself wondering, almost casually, what he has done with the years of his life. Others can say: five years in the war, two years in captivity. Another: forty years on the

railway. Yet another: ten years in a concentration camp. They know why life has been short.

ARCHITECTURE:

Twelve years with drawing board, pencils, slide rule, tracing paper, T square, compasses, the smell of India ink. The draftsman's white smock. The hissing, fluttering sound of tracing paper as one rolls it up. Rolls of cardboard. The daily journey to the office: no longer a student, no longer a writer, but part of the majority. Their faces in the train each morning and evening. I enjoyed wearing my white smock, I enjoyed drawing. Outside it might be snowing, so that one had to switch on the desk lamp; its reflection on the smooth tracing paper. It was wartime. While slowly drawing a line with India ink I would hold my breath. I also enjoyed lettering, erasing whenever my figures, though readable, were not also neat. ZEMENT, SIKA, KLINKER, ZINK, GLASWOLLE, ETERNIT, etc.—these were now the vocabulary of my writing. I was thirty and at last had a profession in which I could earn my living, a diploma, I was thankful to have a job: eight to twelve and one to five. I could now marry. Using my slide rule gave me the feeling of being an expert. Why an architect exactly? My father had been an architect (unlicensed); the transparent tracing paper, the pliable T square, the tape measure—these had been forbidden toys. My drawing was more exact than my writing had previously been. As a draftsman, preparing blueprints, I also felt more of a man. On the building site itself I once had to undergo the experience of seeing a staircase I had worked out and drawn failing to reach the platform to which it led; though the length was correct, a step was missing. That never happened again. The boards for the steps had already been cut; my boss assumed responsibility for the loss. On the site I was addressed as Herr Architekt. Whenever I saw my drawings in the hands

of a metalworker or a joiner, I always felt somewhat apprehensive, even when I knew the plans were in order. Frequently I had not the slightest idea of how something should be done; I only knew that the workers would manage somehow. Craftsmen of all kinds gave me a sinking feeling. When they frowned, I was glad they did not ask me how they should do it, and when they cursed, I walked away. Even when in time I learned how a job must be tackled, I could not do it with my own hands, which would clutch firmly their roll of paper, their mainstay. A feeling of incompetence always remained. The workers did not seem to notice it. Much as I should have liked to stay and watch them, this would not have been the thing to do for any length of time. Though I was being paid hardly more than they were, I was not being paid to look on. Most of the workers were older than I. My brother decided to demonstrate his trust in me. Money was short; it was to be only a small house. The simpler my plan, the better it would have been. But I had to show what I could do, and the result was a silly house. However, work was begun on it: excavations, scaffolding, foundations, boarding, and all the rest according to the plan, then the growing walls and the things not shown in the plan—mounds of earth, planks, piles of bricks, all of them real. After the workers had gone I would stay behind for a while, pretending to be taking measurements. Pipes for the drainage, gravel, spades, wheelbarrows, rolls of roofing felt, gritty to the touch and rather sticky, sacks of cement, a latrine under a blossoming cherry tree, bundles of rusty iron rods on the grass. Once I had a dream: the completed house bore no resemblance to my plans, people said, though it had been built according to my plans. Compared with this dream, the shocks awaiting me on the building site were small ones. A window much too big. It could not be made smaller, since the frames were already ordered. Ideas that would have saved money occurred to me too late. I felt sorry for my brother. (Twenty years later he put his trust in me again. The second house was at least

sensible—it stood properly on its site and did not cut silly capers.) My first mistake as a boss: I engaged a former university friend with whom I had previously worked side by side as an employee. I offered him 500 francs per month instead of 350 and, since we had always chafed at the rigid office hours, eight to twelve and one to five, I allowed him to do his work when he wanted, as long as he put in forty hours a week. My other employee, a technician, I had known as a corporal in the army, and he was glad in those days to have a job. We too were on familiar first-name terms. But for the authorities I was the boss, responsible for a sum of four million francs. Our work was both urgent and pleasant—it was a designing job—and I often worked at home till late into the night. At the same time I thought it wrong that I, now the boss, should arrive at the drawing table later than the others, or leave it earlier. On the other hand, if I turned up punctually at eight and was already standing there in my white smock when the others arrived, it looked as if I were keeping a check on them, and that I found disconcerting too. Occasionally I had to go to conferences. When I returned two hours later, Kurt, my university friend, could hardly wait to show me his sketches as evidence of how industrious he had been. His ideas were lousy, but criticism did not upset him at all; he was always willing to have another try. The other man, the structural draftsman, gradually became increasingly silent, and one day he handed in his notice. Why? He did not want a raise—it was just that it vexed him to see how my university friend, the moment I was out of the office or indeed only in the next room, started to work on his own personal projects. I did not need to look for proof under his drawing board: I could see it easily enough in the stuff he laid before me—lightly penciled eyewash, sketches that could be made in ten minutes—and in the way he flattered me whenever he could. The other, the draftsman, was the only practical person in my office, and a conscientious man: he worked for his wages, whereas Kurt, better paid because he

was a licensed architect, had been deceiving me for months. This embittered him, taking all the pleasure out of his conscientious approach. His name was Adam. He lived in the house in which we worked. One morning, arriving for work as usual, I found his wife there, looking as if she had gone insane. She grabbed hold of me. I AM NOT A MURDERER, HERR FRISCH, she said, I AM NOT A MURDERER. TELL ME I AM NOT A MURDERER! And she showed me their little baby. In order to get some sleep, she had put the little cot in my office for the night. A baby's body, blue. Suffocated. Her husband, the corporal, was at this time away on military duty; it was my task to tell him. It is always the conscientious who get hurt. Weeks went by before I invited the other man, Kurt, to join me in a café. I hardly needed to say anything, merely that there was something we must discuss. His notice? He accepted it before it was even mentioned, without asking for reasons. I was glad I did not have to give my reasons, for Kurt could have reminded me that as an employee I had done exactly the same thing—worked on my competition entry under my drawing board. For a long time the project remained on paper, owing to the shortage of cement during those years, the shortage of steel—all needed for the war. Since at this time I was not fully occupied, I started to write again: plays—so that at least something in my life should have tangible form. I wrote after work. I did not wish to be caught doing other things in my office. The piece of paper I kept beneath my drawing board was only for sudden flashes of inspiration. Five weeks for the first play, three for the second. They were produced at the Schauspielhaus in Zurich, so the building authorities were quite aware that I was writing. One day the construction foreman called me into his shack to confide something to me: a plan, signed with my name like all the other plans, contained a bad error of calculation. MEASUREMENTS TO BE CHECKED ON THE SITE: the usual stamp on every plan. I thanked the foreman for noticing the mistake before the bulldozers had lifted too much soil, and added

that my structural draftsman was not to blame; I myself had drawn this plan, not only signed it, but actually drawn it myself. I should not have said this. The result was that for the remainder of the building time (two years) the foreman never admitted a mistake of his own; it had now been agreed who made the mistakes around here. For a while both activities were going on side by side—the building work and the rehearsals on stage. I would be in the office at eight, and at ten in the Schauspielhaus, where I sat in the orchestra, a layman listening to rehearsals. When the actors went off home to learn their lines, I would ride out to the building site to see the diving tower being faced, plates being laid, carpentry work arriving from the workshops at last to be fitted. Things there didn't always go right, any more than the rehearsals at the Schauspielhaus. In both cases it was a process of giving substance to an idea. Admittedly others were actually doing it, not I, but all the same I had the feeling of having hands. Something was coming into existence. I was aware of living my life to the full, though not without professional problems—the last act was thin, the enameling for the woodwork was ugly beyond recall. Before leaving the building site I would clean my shoes with a piece of wood or wire, then mount my bicycle. As I cycled away I might even find myself whistling.

5/12/74

The morning sea beneath the deep clouds is the color of mother-of-pearl, the waves lifeless, the sun obscured. He finds it better to take off his shoes and walk barefoot, shoes in hand. Gulls over the empty beach, louder than any feeling, louder than the waves. He thinks: It will rain today. Clumps of grass on the dunes. It is windy, and he is wearing only a shirt, no jacket, but he does not feel chilly as long as he keeps going. It is not raining yet. Again not a single person in sight. Here and there a plastic

container in the sand; he had not noticed those yesterday. He wonders how far he will go, shoes in hand. Yesterday's two deck chairs look tiny in the distance, hardly recognizable yet. He is feeling good as he trudges along. Just saving himself from stumbling, he realizes shortly afterward what, a shoe in each hand, he is at the moment thinking: I should like to be able to describe this weekend, this thin present moment, exactly as it is, without inventing anything. But this thought he had already had yesterday in the boutique—he has forgotten the name of the place. Then again he thinks of nothing . . . Then the same thing again: I want to invent nothing; I want to know what I notice and think when I am not thinking of possible readers. Do I write just to satisfy readers, just to give critics something to work on? That question—whether one thinks of one's readers while writing—is asked at every university. I, he thinks, have never thought of my readers as barefooted, for instance . . . Where the sand at the waves' edge is damp and therefore firmer, making it easier to walk, one's feet get cold. It is now high tide, the beach narrower than yesterday. Farther up from the water the sand is dry, walking becomes laborious and the soles of one's feet begin to burn. It is a gritty sand. Once in one's lifetime one ought to walk so far that one loses all the skin off one's feet and really begins to speak to oneself.

Otherwise it happens only in dreams:

Three or four dogs, mastiffs perhaps, anyway large dogs. I am shut up in a kennel with them. They are not attacking me—just barking. I do not look out. They bark as if they had rabies. I do not know who is outside the kennel. I can hear voices, but the kennel remains bolted. Fortunately, for otherwise the dogs would tear you to pieces. They are not only barking now, they are scratching with their paws beneath the door. When they pull

back their legs, I see that each paw has been hacked off, one after another.

Yesterday the long, easy afternoon: as if everything had been solved (as often before) once and for all, a look back without anger and without self-pity, everything solved and purified (only the hexameters still missing) once and for all, and now he comes to a halt on the top of a sand dune, shoes in hand, to cry out in English:

DAMN!

In the first place the sea is not the color of mother-of-pearl, the gulls are not white, the sand is neither yellow nor gray, not even the grass is green or yellow, the deep clouds not violet—

DAMN!

I am always ignorant of the true position.

DAMN!

Afterward I cannot understand my behavior. No declaration of a kind that could cut me like a knife has been made; everybody says so. I am hurting myself with a delusion. Usually, when my mind forsakes me, there are no outward signs, but I myself see my mistakes every day. This makes for uncertainty and aggressiveness. My fears of my mind's forsaking me, my emotionality—unstable, overexcited, fragile. It is no use my thinking I know this or that. A long, easy afternoon: the world withdrawn into its future without me, and so this narrowing down to the I which knows itself excluded from the common experience of the future. All that remains is the mad desire for present identity

through a woman. I know this vacuum, when a quarter of an hour—the coming one—seems longer than the whole past year; and just when I was thinking I still had some hope. The sick man in me, longing for death but saying nothing; his calm desire to bash out my brains on the nearest wall—

SHIT!

On Wednesday I shall be sixty-three . . . It will rain today. But he had already thought that an hour ago, and it isn't raining yet. Just at one moment a few drops. It is nine o'clock. After ten (as he had read on the bedroom door) breakfast is no longer served. So once again he knows what, shoes in hand, he is thinking: I must wake her up . . . In the mornings Lynn is not to be spoken to. Her eyelids without their make-up are pale and waxlike. But she is breathing. Her loose hair spread over the pillow, a bare arm almost touching the floor, a foot protruding below the sheets.

IN THESE DAYS I RISE WITH THE BIRCHES
AND COMB MY WHEATEN HAIR FROM MY BROW
BEFORE A MIRROR OF ICE.

. . .

IN THESE DAYS IT DOES NOT PAIN ME
THAT I CAN FORGET
AND MUST REMEMBER

At dawn, years ago (1958), I was walking along the coast road while she still slept; not barefoot, but even in espadrilles one's feet can begin to burn. Impelled by a sense of urgency, I was walking swiftly. Though not consciously looking, I saw the anchored row of ships waiting to be broken up, fishing boats far

out in the dusk. At first I just went out in front of the house and sat down on the jetty, looking up now and again at the house. Was I hoping she would come looking for me? When one is asleep an hour is nothing, but for the watcher it seems long. Then I went for a stroll, to keep myself from getting cold. Suddenly bored. At the point where the narrow coast road bends around the cliff and one loses sight of the little harbor and the house in which she was then sleeping, the small terrace on the top floor, there I sat down again on the wall, my arms spread out on either side of me, hands flat on the rough mortar, sandaled feet swinging. Then, brushing the mortar from my hands, I again walked on, before this day should dawn. I set off like someone with a message to deliver, an urgent one, but got no farther than LA SPEZIA. Too early in the day for coffee. Not a soul up and about, at least no person in his right mind, shutters still closed. They were not yet even setting up the daily market. No buses; one could walk in the middle of the road. Unable to think, I was glad to sit shivering on a public bench. I did not know where the future lay. Later, at the railroad station, after studying the timetable without my reading glasses, I looked to see how much money I had in my pocket. Back to her or away? Near her I could see only her, but near her, I knew, madness began. Yet still I thought it could be decided as by the toss of a coin: heads or tails. But it was already decided. Derisively, I threw up a real coin, one hundred lire—then picked it up without looking to see whether it was heads or tails. I waited only until I could get a cup of coffee in this town of LA SPEZIA . . . Two months earlier, in PARIS, at exactly this same twilit hour, our first kisses on a public bench and then in the market, where we drank our first coffee, with butchers in bloody aprons at the next table—too gross a portent. Her journey to Zurich; a distraught woman on a railroad platform; luggage, umbrella, bags. A week in Zurich as lovers and then, in clear recognition, the first parting. Hair really can stand on end: I saw it happen with

her. A clear recognition, bearable no more than four weeks. My journey to Naples. She at the station; her arms had strength. Where should we go? The place we found to live in came to us by pure chance, and again the portent was too gross: PORTO VENERE, where we arrived in a taxi like a couple of refugees . . . Before I got up, I shook the sand out of my espadrilles and used the coin to pay for my coffee. We lived for seven months together, and then I fell ill with hepatitis. I was forty-eight and had never before been a patient in a hospital. I enjoyed it at first, everything white and service included. But then came the fear of losing my memory. For the first time. During the night a sentence that I must say to her. The sentence. It seemed to me right, and therefore it was important, since I was unable to write, that I should learn it by heart. Each morning I was given a transfusion in my right arm: it lasted three or four hours, dripping from a bag above my head. So as not to forget, I repeated to myself, every quarter of an hour, the sentence that had come to me in the night. I did not always know what it meant: it was just a group of words. After the senior physician had paid his visit and I had been hearing other words, it was vitally important to recall that group of words. Following the transfusion I always felt weak, but not only that: my vision was also disturbed. However, I had to jot the sentence down before I went off to sleep. Toward evening, my senses restored, I read the sentence. It was not a sentence at all—the subject so indecipherable I could not even guess at it, and no sign of a verb. I felt frightened. She came to visit me, and I could not say it. Could I hear at least? I did not notice that she was wearing a new summer dress. She was disappointed. She had spent the whole day searching Zurich for a new dress to cheer me up. She had also bought flowers for me, larkspur, which I like. They were in the apartment, she said, three bunches of them. I could not understand all she said, and I sent her away. Yellower than a real Chinaman, I authorized the purchase of two Volkswagens—

one for her and one for me—for when I came out of this hospital. Fortunately there was someone passing through who could accompany her to Rome. Not just anybody, but Hans Magnus. I sent her away, in the summer of 1959, and shortly afterward I recovered. I could walk again: half an hour to the sulfur baths and half an hour back again, gradually longer. My memory also returned, and I knew she was in Rome. When I was able to stay on my feet for four or five hours each day, I realized I did not want to live without her. ROMA NON RISPONDE. I could not understand why through the whole night I was unable to get her, and during the day it was the same. ROMA NON RISPONDE. I could think of many reasons why, but none of them convinced me. What most upset me was that ringing tone, then the inevitable voice saying: ROMA NON RISPONDE. Since I kept falling asleep over the telephone, I fetched a blanket and set the alarm clock, so that I could ring her every hour. It was a sick man who had sent her away, I knew. The doctor had allowed me to dress and go down to the street for a few minutes to wave to them as they drove off. Had she not got my letters? I was no longer yellow. I wanted her. ROMA NON RISPONDE, ROMA NON RISPONDE. At last, however, I heard her voice at the other end, and a few days later we met at the Swiss-Italian border and drove in separate Volkswagens to Zurich. She told me what had happened in Rome. In Zurich an experiment with separate apartments, she living in the house where Gottfried Keller had lived when he was a government official, with doors of walnut and fittings of brass. What got into me? In Siena, in the fall of 1959, I stood in front of the post office like an awakened sleepwalker, for a while incapable of crossing the sunny square. The letter had been sent off, express—a fat letter. I had proposed marriage to her. Yes. I could not imagine her reply. No. The friend who was waiting for me in a nearby bar found me rather confused and did not know why. What was the earliest I could expect her answer? During this fall I was not

allowed to drink, not even coffee: in such a sober spirit had I proposed marriage to her. In Assisi I went to the post office first and then to the cathedral, where a marriage ceremony was being performed, a Roman Catholic one; in Florence to the post office before seeking a hotel with my friend. Should I take my courage in my hands and ring her? My letter, which at that time I knew by heart, had arrived—that I learned from her only after my return to her in Zurich. What could I have been expecting from marriage only six months after the tardy ending of my first, respectable marriage? I went with her to Frankfurt. In the lecture hall, during her first reading at the university, I sat holding her coat upon my knees. On subsequent occasions she preferred to go to Frankfurt alone. Once on the railroad platform, where I had gone to meet her, she stopped when she saw me, utterly confused. What was in the telegram she received the following day and found so upsetting? That remained her secret. The fact that I went that winter to another woman, between our two apartments, did not free me from my subjection. My children also loved her, I thought. Later we moved together to Rome, VIA GIULIA 102, where it was noisy. Her Rome. Rumors of our marriage appeared in the newspapers, mentioning an Italian church I had never even seen. Could they not understand that she was a free person? When staying with friends, hers or mine, we were always put in the same room without question. We belonged together, or at any rate seemed to—it was hardly a secret now. In an Italian restaurant a German came up to our table. I watched their delight over this chance meeting and listened to them talking for a full half hour. She did not introduce me, and I did not introduce myself, since I knew she would not like it. Nor did he, Peter Huchel, venture to introduce himself, although he had recognized me. It was often rather comic. Once, when I visited her in Naples, she did not show me the house in which she was then living—not even the street. I could understand that. She disliked having people who were

close to her meet one another. She did not want me to attend meetings of the writers' group, GRUPPE 47: that was her territory. She had several territories. Now and again her secretiveness annoyed me. What was she afraid of? Once we visited Klagenfurt and she showed me the fountain with the dragon, famous from her description. I was the first man (she told me) she had ever shown it to. Me she showed to her family. On another occasion, in Rome, she divided past and present. She suddenly stopped, as if struck by a brick, and held the back of her hand to her steep forehead: No, please let's not go down that alley, please not! I asked no questions. One compromises oneself through revealing one's secrets—that is true. A gathering of all the people who have played a role in one's life or might one day play a role in it—that is a dreadful thought. To see them taking stock of one another, reaching agreement after an exchange of contradictory impressions, understanding one another—that would be the death of all self-understanding. Her radiance: we were seated before a real-estate agent in Rome who had the apartment of a baronessa to rent, and he was giving us to understand that the baronessa might perhaps prefer an American diplomat as tenant. DOTTORE, she said, looking as downcast and hesitant as a princess who has not been recognized, SENTA, she said, SIAMO SCRITTORI. We got the apartment, with a balcony and a view across Rome. Frequently she was away for weeks on end, while I waited in her Rome. Once, when I knew she was on the way back to Rome, I could not wait a moment longer and drove to the outskirts of the city to keep watch for her on a roadside bank. I was waiting for her blue Volkswagen. To welcome her. In case she did not recognize me at the roadside I had my own car standing ready, pointing toward ROMA/CENTRO. Occasional Volkswagens drove up, some of them blue, so I waved. Perhaps she had stopped for a meal in Siena, RISTORANTE DI SPERANZA. I had plenty of time. When she came, she did not in fact see me, but it did not take me long to catch up to her. I saw her round

head, her hair, from behind. Obviously she did not understand the hooting behind her, and some time passed before I could overtake her in the way the police do when stopping a vehicle. So she was also a bit frightened. I had been a fool, and I knew it. Her independence was part of her radiance. Jealousy was the price I had to pay for it, and I paid it in full. Lying on the summery balcony with its view across Rome, I slept with my face in my own vomit. By suffering I only increased my tender longings. But when she was there, she was there. Or was I deceiving myself? What was between us had never been a marriage of petty-minded domesticity. What did I find so torturing about it? I sat in my room, not listening deliberately, but hearing her talk to someone on the telephone. Her voice sounded cheerful, she laughed, the conversation went on a long time. I had no idea to whom she was speaking when she said: I am going to London the day after tomorrow. Without mentioning that we were going to London together for my play. Once I did the impermissible: I read letters that were not addressed to me. Letters from a man. They were considering marriage. I was ashamed and said nothing. When I did ask, she did not lie. She wrote: If anything changes between us, I shall tell you. There was another occasion when I thought I could not go on without her. I was driving north, a route I knew by heart: ten hours to Como, where I usually spent the night, but this time I drove on without a break. She did not know I was on my way to join her. I drove on—to Airolo in Switzerland, where it was night. Full moon. A drive across the St. Gotthard would be lovely now. Shortly afterward I met thick fog. Only with great difficulty could one make out the border stones along the highway. And later it began to rain. I considered whether it would not be more sensible to spend the night in the hostel, but I did not get out of the car. I was not feeling at all tired. On the contrary. Shortly after the hostel, where the road slopes downhill, my right headlight failed. I did not stop, but just reduced my

speed. Twenty kilometers an hour. More was quite impossible, since I had only my left headlight and had to be able to see the stones to the right of the highway in order to know where I was. It was pouring rain. I was now the only driver on the road, not at all tired or even sleepy (or so I thought) after fourteen hours alone at the wheel. When suddenly I saw the white stones on my left instead of my right, I knew that I had run off the road. I braked sharply. The car came to a halt, tipping forward slightly. I did not get out to see how far the car was hanging over the precipice, but put it into reverse. It worked. I drove on. Very slowly, stopping now and again to wipe the windshield. The fog persisted, even after the rain eased up. In Andermatt all the hotels appeared to be closed—it was now after midnight. So I drove on, after getting out at last to see what lights I still had: the left headlight and two weak little parking lights. I could not give up now. I had drunk nothing (a Campari in Siena, three espressos in Como, a beer in Airolo), and I was feeling all right. Approaching drivers protested at my headlight, but I could not switch it off and rely on their seeing the two weak parking lights. I hoped I would not run into the police. At about three in the morning I reached home, UETIKON AM SEE. Nothing had happened, nothing at all: I've come from Rome!—that was all. I was there. Why had I not at least telephoned? I did not know. I had not thought of it, had just been hoping she would be there. She was there. That was thirteen years ago. Ingeborg is dead. The last time we spoke together was in 1963, one morning in a café in Rome. She told me that she had found my diary in a locked drawer in that apartment, HAUS ZUM LANGENBAUM. She had read it and then burned it. We did not show up well at the end, either of us.

GURNEY'S INN:

The young waitress, a different one from the day before, pours

water with lumps of ice into the two glasses. Lynn has not yet come down, but he knows what to order: MELON, PANCAKE WITH BACON AND JAM, COFFEE. Her Sunday breakfast, and now it is raining in real earnest.

MY LIFE AS A MAN:

Now, years later, I can see, but not recognize myself: she is in the Bircher Benner Clinic in Zurich, and he goes there to visit her. He has to wait; apparently there is some objection to his visit. But he insists on seeing her and speaking with her. He does not consider he is being inhuman. When he goes into the room, she looks at him in silence, appalled. Why is she here in this clinic? She has gone there on her own wish. He sees flowers but does not ask who sent them. He watches the nurse, who is just exchanging yesterday's flowers for today's. He does not sit down on the edge of the bed but remains standing; in two or three hours' time he has to be at the airport. Wishing to rise from her bed to dress for a walk, she asks him to leave the room, so that he will not see her in her nightgown. He is flying off to America, yes. Without her. She knows all that from his letters. She knows Marianne and has spoken with her, like a grand lady. He has come, in the fifth year, to say good-by. He does not quite believe in her illness. On the other hand, he does believe her story about the flowers, which she is receiving daily, and it does not make him jealous: he has finished with his subjection. They go out for a walk in the woods—one hour, the doctor has prescribed. Her letter to Rome, telling him that she was in the hospital, had been a great shock, but it had not made him alter his plans. She is still hoping that, once in America, he will relent and send for her to join him. A chance to get well. So, if she goes on being ill, it will be his fault. What has the doctor diagnosed? She looks pitiable. What, apart from diet and a lot of rest, has the doctor prescribed? No visits; a visit from him

would be particularly bad for her. They could walk arm in arm, so that both would be under the umbrella. He does not know why this walk, this hour, already seem so familiar. What to talk about? How to keep silent? He cannot concentrate; three hours still to take-off. He will let her know his address, etc. Yes, he remembers her telling him once about an elderly man in Vienna she had seen but not spoken to—probably a Jew. They had understood each other, so it seemed to her, at a single glance, and she had fled from him as if from Fate. It is very odd: this strange man has been here—yes, here in this clinic. Quite by chance. They recognized each other at once in the corridor; and he went for a walk with her, this very same walk. But she does not mention his name or anything else much about him. All very odd. It is this stranger who is sending her the flowers. Every day the same—thirty-five roses. So she says, and he gladly believes her; it means she will not be alone when he goes. And you, she tells him six months later in Rome, flew off to America while I was lying in the clinic and you did not send for me from America. You did not even realize that I was sending those flowers to myself, to make you send for me.

CHECK-OUT

for after breakfast what is there to do? Go walking with an umbrella? Ping-pong? They could of course sit on the balcony and watch the rain falling into the sea . . . It irritates him that Lynn, who made the booking, knows more or less what he is now paying for their overnight stay. She is already sitting in the car. He hands over almost twice what she earns in a whole week—man's money, which in a marriage is always taken so much for granted . . . When he looks at Lynn from the side, it is never without some slight excuse—giving her a light or pretending he wants to see something they are passing—the dunes, the shacks, the tower. She, seated at the wheel, is usually

looking straight ahead. Either he has got used to the mocking slant of her lips in the daytime, or her lips have changed. Once only, at dinner the day before yesterday, had Lynn looked hurt. Why? At least he had noticed it, and had asked, but he had not discovered the reason. A misunderstanding? They are taking the same route back. Presumably she too had been somewhat nervous that this weekend might go wrong. Now it is no longer necessary to gloss over the nervousness. He has, he discovers, lost his tobacco pouch. Silence, without a pipe in his mouth. They know too little and at the same time too much about each other just to chat superficially. He does not even know yet in what area Lynn is vulnerable and what would lead to their first quarrel. Lynn does not seem in fact to be thinking about it at all. Once in a while does no harm. You need a marriage, a long one, to become a monster.

AMAGANSETT

So that is the name of the little place where he decided yesterday to describe this weekend: in an autobiographical way. Completely autobiographical—without inventing a single character; without inventing happenings of more significance than his own simple reality; without taking refuge in inventions of any kind; without seeking to justify his writing as a duty toward society. A story without a message. He has none to give, and yet he is alive. He wants simply to tell it (though not without some consideration for the people he mentions by name) : his life.

I TRY ON STORIES LIKE CLOTHES

More and more often some memory comes along and shocks me. Usually these memories are not shocking in themselves, little things not worth telling in the kitchen or as a passenger in a car. What shocks me is rather the discovery that I have been

concealing my life from myself. I have been serving up stories to some sort of public, and in these stories I have, I know, laid myself bare—to the point of non-recognition. I live, not with my own story, but just with those parts of it that I have been able to put to literary use. Whole areas are missing: my father, my brother, my sister. Last year my sister died. I was disturbed to realize that I knew so much about her and yet had written none of it. It is not even true that I have always described just myself. I have never described myself. I have only betrayed myself.

MAX, WHAT IS YOUR STATE OF MIND?

Lynn's question, because it is raining . . . A trace of melancholy, visible in almost every photograph, has always irked me. It comes from a paralytic condition of the eyelids which also, as I know, gives me a superior expression. The trouble with my eyelids is the result of my having as a boy, when I had measles and should have been lying in a dimmed light, secretly used a flashlight beneath the bedclothes to read for hours on end: DON QUIXOTE. Afterward I had my eyelids treated, twice weekly. The ophthalmologist turned the lids up and painted them on the inside with a brown tincture which hurt. The penalty for my disobedience. It stung fiendishly, and afterward I had to sit for an hour in the waiting room, blindfolded. The treatment was of little use. These eyelids—making me look as if my eyes are always lowered, suspicious, supercilious—are a part of my physiognomy, and as a schoolboy I discovered how much certain of my teachers were vexed by them: a mediocre brain and such arrogance with it! I never knew exactly what this word meant, but obviously it was something bad, reprehensible. Sit down! That was long ago. Later nobody said: Sit down!—but the physiognomy remained, together with its effect. I realize it when somebody, on getting to know me better, expresses surprise that I am not arrogant after all. This discovery is more of a relief to

the other person than to me. What it tells me is that I must always be careful, I must be particularly modest in my manner. A natural pride must always, as expressed by this face of mine, look like arrogance. So I adopt a jovially modest manner, and if the other person does not respond to it, I start accusing myself—

NO, he says, I AM FINE.

The rain is not depressing him. He is glad of the present moment, whatever it is. Now it is the to-ing and fro-ing of the windshield wipers. He notices everything as it comes into view. It is not memoirs he is after. It is the present moment. The landscape, now at this very moment, is rather dreary. All the same, he looks at it. He sees her foot on the accelerator, a damaged shoe, her right hand on the steering wheel, a slim hand, the to-ing and fro-ing of the windshield wipers. He is missing nothing. He is grateful for this weekend which is not yet past.

BRITTANY:

Three of us in the little Morris, I sitting the whole time in the back. Why should I make the driving mistakes, pick the wrong routes? I say nothing at all; do not chide her when she takes the wrong turning. ORLY instead of ORLEANS—that is no great misfortune, just a detour of an hour, but it is not my fault, and that makes her irritable. I am being a pig, I know. I gaze at the scenery and do not need to curse myself—I just talk (for instance) about Peter Handke, WUNSCHLOSES UNGLÜCK, a piece of writing that has impressed me. Her rebukes, when I am sitting at the steering wheel, are very often justified. Now I need a holiday, and for three weeks I want to see France and not to make driving mistakes. A French gendarme comes up with a severe face, demanding papers: had she not seen the red light? After inspecting the woman driver, the gendarme turns out

to be a cavalier. MADAME, he says, careful, however, in his deployment of charm not to appear to overlook the presence of two men in the Morris, BON VOYAGE, at the same time raising a hand to his stiff helmet. So here we are at the sea, MONT-SAINT-MICHEL, at low tide. A walk on the mud flats, far apart. Difficult for our dear friend, I think to myself, with such a miserable couple. LA DOUCE FRANCE. Lunch: simple but delicious; our friend the composer can speak as intelligently about the old Celts as he can about Munich. Then she wants a cigarette after all but, since she has really given up smoking, I have none on me. So she asks our friend. He feels in his pocket, then puts the pack on the table for her to help herself. She does. I am listening to what he is saying. Her glance in my direction: can't I see she is waiting for a light? I ask him whether he has any matches. Matches? Yes, he has some in his coat pocket, either the right or the left, he says, not letting himself be distracted from his plate. All I have to do is get up and fetch his matches from his coat pocket, right or left. Why do I laugh? Because I have some matches myself and do not need to get up. I give her a light. There is reproof in her glance: What are you playing at? He has been our cherished guest for years, an amusing table companion, a stimulating fellow traveler. Later, back in the car, I ask him if he can say why he uses me as his manservant. One of many instances. A moment of constraint; he does not understand what is going on, and she is shocked by me. I am becoming unpredictable:

YOU OFFEND ALL OUR FRIENDS!

and then my touchiness when, not having accused myself, I am finally handed out admonitions in private. A pathological touchiness: the reverse side of self-accusation, which is itself a reverse side of self-righteousness. As if it were not for others to judge what weaknesses I have, what errors I make.

Since she had not finished her office work on the beach, Lynn asks him to take over the wheel. She is reading now. He enjoys driving when people show confidence in him. And Lynn apparently does, otherwise she would not be able to sit there reading. An almost completely straight road, consequently boring when there is nothing to overtake. He considers silently what they will do in Manhattan: Sunday afternoon, rain, her small caged apartment.

MAX, YOU ARE WRONG

says the strange young woman, and he takes it like any normal person, any healthy, reasonable person. That is a relief to me, for I had not really thought him capable of it . . . He does not feel it as a rebuke. He realizes that he should be taking the left-hand lane, and he simply does so, without saying SORRY and then relapsing into a vexed silence. He sees it as a little act of helpfulness, not as a reproach. Recently he spoke of ALICE IN THE WONDERLAND, though he really knew it should be ALICE IN WONDERLAND. When Lynn, who incidentally had never read the book, corrected him, he did not wince, and it did not spoil his enthusiasm. He did not take it as a reproof. His mistake yesterday on the beach, when he predicted a fine Sunday, is not held against him; they both just regret that it is raining after all. When Lynn makes a mistake about the population of Berlin, he can also say YOU ARE WRONG, and say it uninhibitedly. It is not like a tit for tat, so he does not have to soften the correction, to say I THINK YOU ARE WRONG. It can happen that they both do not know—for instance, when Indians were last living on this island. Now and again Lynn even ventures an ARE YOU SURE? But he does not have to restrain himself—it is a perfectly natural question. If she knows better than he does, he is quite content, for it

saves time or money, a detour or a misplaced hope. And when he *is* sure—for example, about the opening times of the Whitney Museum—her question does not exasperate him. He could go to the Whitney Museum and stand in front of the paintings without getting on his own nerves, without a stupid feeling of I-told-you-so. He is not in a state of tension, wondering when his next mistake will occur; he is not feeling as if he were taking an examination. Once, in Central Park, she slipped on a black rock, and he begged her pardon. ARE YOU CRAZY? she said—he had not yet spoiled her with his self-accusations . . . Half an hour earlier, seated at the steering wheel, Lynn had not responded to his question why, in a strange countryside, one could always tell when it was Sunday. Only now does she ask him whether he has found the answer. He too had meanwhile been thinking of other things.

We heard Neruda reading.

Too late now for my visit to Chile.

Tomorrow (Monday) there will be various things to settle, books to mail ahead so the luggage won't be overweight, some telephone calls to friends from my previous visit whom I have been neglecting. All of them ask after Marianne and when we shall be coming again.

DID YOU HAVE A GOOD TIME?

Both of us have been working, that I can say, and also taking vacations—once in London and once in Brittany. On the whole no health worries. London would be the place to live. But now we have an apartment in Berlin. The noise of the planes during the day. One gets used to it, and the ear can distinguish whether the plane is taking off or landing. The descending planes have

already let down the landing gear by the time they appear over the avenue. Ascending planes, seen through the same window across the same avenue, fly higher and usually with trails of smoke from all four jets. They sound shriller, they do not whistle like the descending planes, but in the air between the houses they leave a rasping noise. It starts at seven in the morning, a good time to get up and go into the kitchen, then to my writing desk. The older I get, the less I can bear myself when I am not working. I write about my time in the Swiss army, a speech on hearth and home, an open letter to the Bundesrat concerning the refugees from Chile. When the sun is shining outside, the white Venetian blinds can be adjusted, reducing the glare to a mild brightness. Our second winter in Berlin, our second spring. Your birthday party went well, my writing desk serving as a buffet table; so many clever friends; dancing. Working days with books, occasionally with flowers. The apartment has not been overfurnished. No carpets. I hear footsteps (not only shoes) on the parquet flooring in the so-called Berlin Room. Then I know that you are coming to wish me good morning, barefoot—

What are we doing wrong together?

On the ship to Europe (the service is being closed down this year), I play chess for hours daily. You prefer being alone on deck, wrapped by the steward in rugs and alone with your thoughts or, when it is too windy on deck, in the bar—preferably alone. I play chess with myself and I usually lose; that is to say, I identify myself with the losing color when it is checkmate, without argument. When I seat myself on the other side of the little green table, before that decisive moment is reached, it is still I who lose. Not that it matters in any way—only I can never tell why.

BUT WHERE ARE YOU TODAY? PROBABLY OUT WITH YOUR HUSBAND FOR A WALK . . . DO YOU THINK HE HAS NOTICED? . . . WHAT FOOLISHNESS! IT IS AS OBVIOUS AS A BUMPER STICKER, AS OBVIOUS AS AN ABDICATION . . . I HAVE SPENT MANY MESSAGE UNITS SEEKING YOUR VOICE, BUT I ALWAYS GET FREDERICK INSTEAD. WELL, FREDERICK, I ASK CORDIALLY, WHAT AMAZING TRIUMPHS HAVE YOU ACCOMPLISHED TODAY?

How swiftly the past emerges: the figure of that strange young woman on the path through the undergrowth, OVERLOOK—that was yesterday.

EXIT 35

He sees the green signs.

NO LEFT TURN

Lynn is reading.

EXIT 29

Has he been sleeping?

MAX, YOU ARE A FORTUNATE MAN

says Lynn when once again, in order not to be silent for miles on end, he tells the story of how in 1963 I was given Marlene Dietrich's guest apartment—a true anecdote which can always be relied on to raise mild laughter . . . He is not used to this automatic gearshift. It is dead easy, he thinks; he has already been driving for two hours and more, the gray outlines of Manhattan now in sight and again this interminable cemetery in

Queens, when his left foot forgets that it is not a clutch, but a brake. It was lucky Lynn is wearing the seat belt, lucky too that the driver of the car behind was just able to swerve around the Ford as it suddenly came to a stop . . . The result might have been two fatal road casualties, a young American woman (full particulars) and an elderly Swiss (full particulars). Their weekend at the coast would have become public property. Our weekend.

Now Lynn is driving again.

He sits in silence, rather shaken. IF YOU CAN NO LONGER PUT UP WITH OUR BEST FRIENDS' CHILDREN AND THEIR LITTLE DOG, WE MIGHT AS WELL GO INTO AN OLD PEOPLE'S HOME RIGHT AWAY. And a few seconds later she is proved right: I drive over the Bundesallee (Berlin) against the red light.

It is still Sunday.

My Jewish fiancée from Berlin (during the Nazi period) was not named HANNA, but Käte, and they were not at all alike, that girl in my life and the character in the novel he wrote. All they had in common was the historical situation and, within this situation, a young man who later was unable to explain his behavior. The rest is art—the art of exercising discretion toward oneself . . . How had it really been? It is curious, the places where it occasionally comes back to me: at the Friedrichstrasse railroad station, where I show my passport to the German Democratic Republic officials and see the expression on their faces as they size me up. I do not confuse them with the Nazi official who in 1937 sized me up at the station in Basel. JOURNALIST? he asked and, after I had nodded, not without a youthful feeling of pride in my occupation, he added: AND I SUPPOSE THIS JEWESS GIVES YOU ALL THE ATROCITY STORIES. On the platform I

begged her not to return to Germany. But she wanted to—her parents were in Berlin. On the carriage step I was still clutching her: Stay here! Calf love weighed down with an excess of conscience. She was my first partner. We did not live together, but we met every day. She was a student. Our acts of love, in the days when in Nuremberg the racial laws were being promulgated, were beginnerish, inexpert, romantic—not once in all the five years the slightest, even secret temptation to be unfaithful. She wanted a child, and that alarmed me. I was still too immature, a failed writer about to start a new career in order not to become an idler. A visit to her parents in Berlin-Lankwitz. The father, a small white-haired man, led me through the museum, arranged by himself, where an old custodian greeted him amiably: HEIL HITLER, HERR GEHEIMRAT. Out in the streets I saw the Stürmer display stands with their pictures of Jews subjecting Aryan children to ritual murder. I went to the theater—without my fiancée, for she was an undesirable. Another time I saw Brown Shirts marching and heard them shouting in chorus: JUDA VERRECKE! They really spoke those hideous words. I stood in Unter den Linden, fear making me insolent, and did not raise my foreign arm. WARTE NUR!—Just you wait!—called out an SA man, and others in the column turned around to look. In Nuremberg, where her mother came from, she wanted to show me the famous sausage grill, the Bratwurstglöckl, and did not notice the sign: JUDEN UNERWUENSCHT—No Jews Allowed. Nothing happened, because she did not have the right kind of nose, but I could eat nothing behind those bottleglass windows. Later, in the train (I remember we were standing on the open platform of the last car in order to be alone, with a view of the tracks narrowing in perspective), she said: YOU MUSTN'T THINK BADLY OF GERMANY. Then I was ready to marry her, so that she could stay in Switzerland, and we went to the Registry Office in Zurich to put up the banns. But she saw that mine was not the kind of love that wanted children, and she rejected it, absolutely. Later

I found a little weapon in her briefcase—not a revolver, just a small pistol, but it was loaded; I stole it from her. Was it because she was a Jewess that I did not want children? Unable to decide what I truly felt, I went out into the woods to think, but found myself unable to believe even my own thoughts. I threw up a coin: heads or tails? How this throw, my appeal to the oracle, turned out I no longer remember. She herself spoke it: YOU ARE PREPARED TO MARRY ME JUST BECAUSE I AM JEWISH—NOT FOR LOVE. I said: We are going to get married, yes, let's get married. She said: No. Her uncle in Cairo, who had dug up the Nefertiti head, was able to give her money to study in Basel; I myself remained in Zurich. Her parents, very German-minded Jews who could never take Hitler's words as referring to themselves, managed to get away in 1938 and lived till they were over ninety.

SUPERMARKET

Lynn still has a few things to buy for Monday evening. She looks at prices, examines the goods, and puts things back on the shelves. He can be of no assistance to her, so he stands between the shelves watching the people—the SILENT MAJORITY, not poor, but gray. MEN ARE TO BE PITIED, says Indra's daughter, yet all the same the shelves are full: vegetables, fruit, elsewhere cans stacked up like munitions—no shortage of anything. He reads the price labels, in order to compare them with the prices at home, but he cannot remember the prices at home. This makes him ashamed. CAN I HELP YOU? A black clerk is addressing him. Then Lynn asks whether he likes his olives green or black. She is quite absorbed, in no hurry. It is Sunday, and it is afternoon. When he goes shopping, taking goods from the shelves and putting them in the little wire basket, he does it quickly, acting on impulse. Lynn has to work it all out, and he is glad that the time is passing. She is glad to have somebody waiting who will

pick up the full bags after they are paid for and carry them out to the car. But she is nowhere near that stage yet. She is looking for yet another kind of spice. He has plenty of time. She is not used to having somebody wait for her. He stands reading a newspaper. When he looks up, he cannot see her, she has vanished in the crowd. What does she look like? Then he recognizes her from behind, by her red hair. For a while he is curious, as one is when seeing an unknown figure from the back in the street or in a museum: that figure might have several different faces. But he knows it will not be an empty face. As she stands in the line in front of the check-out counter with her wire basket, she gives him a glance, a smile; then she hands over two bills, presumably ten-dollar bills, and afterward counts very carefully the smaller bills and the coins she receives as change. Her purchases have not been extravagant—one bag is enough for them all, and he carries it out in his left arm.

MONEY

The green gas meter in the hallway. My mother had to put in twenty centimes before the stove would light, and then the gas would go out suddenly again; anything taking much cooking needed a lot of twenty-centime pieces. It was no use my father's having the odd coin in his pocket when he came home late at night: the municipal gasworks gave no credit. Since when have I known what money is? The green gas meter taught me that what we cannot afford is not for us. When I went out with a girl in a hired sailboat and the wind fell, so that our hour was exceeded and I knew I would not be able to pay for the still weather—that was just embarrassing, not poverty. There was a red Velo in the cycle shop, a racing model that I dreamed of for years. But I knew it was not for me. My father could not buy me that: it was worrying enough for him when I had to buy books or drawing instruments for my studies. I remember my

mother's constant fear of the marshals. But when my father made a successful property deal, he was not content simply to pay off his debts. He loved making gestures—and so he bought my mother a gold brooch. Saving was not in his nature, so it was we who had to learn it. What a sensation (I remember) when we discovered coffee could be made from acorns! My brother was given a violin; I accepted that as right and proper: he was musical, and he was the elder. It was the ambition of both father and mother that we should become scholars, what we studied being our own concern. So I chose German language and literature. A friendly professor got me a scholarship to enable me to continue studying after my father's death; eight hundred francs per year. I wrote reports for the newspapers about ice-hockey matches, festival processions, cabaret shows, young swans on the Limmat, etc. I was paid per line, and for my first major fee of twenty francs I wrote the newspaper a letter of thanks. When I could pay the rent on time, I felt independent. I was never tempted to waste time looking in shopwindows at things I could not afford—a good camera, for instance—and certainly I never dared enter the shop just to get the feel of a camera like that in my hands. I got as far as Istanbul and Greece, where I spent my nights out in the open. There was a Swiss club in Istanbul. Should the elderly members ask me whether I had had lunch, I would always lie and say yes, grateful for the black coffee with plenty of sugar. Money as a means of barter; one either has it or one hasn't; otherwise it is not worth talking about. The important thing is not to have any debts. My father died in debt. There was a threat of distraint, even bankruptcy. My older brother, a chemical engineer, just married, took over the debt and gradually paid it off, to save my mother from the disgrace. Only once have I myself been in debt. My first typewriter, a REMINGTON PORTABLE, was a bargain at 150 francs, but I could put down only 50 of them. I know that I never paid the balance . . . I remem-

ber when money for the first time assumed a major role. I had a girl friend from the French part of Switzerland, rather older than I was. She lived by giving private lessons. I was still a student and lived with my mother. I did not mind being invited to a meal by my mistress. Now and again I would bring along a bottle of wine, but the meat she always paid for. Somebody had remarked, she told me, that she looked in need of a vacation and had offered her five hundred francs to finance it. I had no objection: he was a very nice man, she said. When, as a soldier, I next came home on leave, she would have nothing more to do with me. Her eyes had been opened, she said, with regard to my virility. I did not understand any of it. Shortly afterward she married an industrialist. On the other hand, at no moment of my life did it ever enter my mind that I might owe a mistress to my money; as a man I am much too vain for that. My first salary as an architect: 350 francs a month, rising to 500 francs, and that, in those days, was just about enough to support a wife and child.

August 1943	Income	Expenses
Competition, 1st prize	3,000.—	
Salary from Professor Dunkel	490.—	
For Mama		500.—
Office party		60.—
With Trudy		15.—
Shirts		34.—
Household expenses		350.—

September 1943		
Bicycle for myself		352.—
Drawing materials		40.—
Trestles for drawing table		33.—
Book binders		7.50

Pocket money on military service		50.—
Household expenses		350.—
Wage adjustment office	190.96	
Fee from publisher	32.—	
Schweizer Rundschau	20.—	
Office stamp		42.—
Concert with Trudy		14.—

The idea that salary should be figured according to one's needs was not one I was then conversant with. One must just live according to one's income. I can tell from the mere look of a restaurant that it is a restaurant for other people, not for me. I do not even have to read the menu beside the door to know I don't belong in there, even if I happen to have the money in my pocket. One result of my lack of money I cannot forget, for I carry it around in my mouth: my teeth. During my first period of study, when I was earning my living as a free-lance journalist, I did not have the money to pay for a proper dentist; dentistry students practiced root-canal work on my teeth for nothing. The consequences were to be apparent later, when not even money could put them right. For a long time, up to my thirtieth year, I knew no rich people, with the exception of W., my friend and sponsor. I saw wealth only from the outside, without knowing where it came from, and without envy. A villa standing in its own grounds was not for me—you have to be born to it. Only once in my life have I gone hungry because I had no money: that was 1933 in Prague, and it lasted only three days. I still had one Czech crown, and I gazed through the windows of bakers' shops, persuading myself each time that I was not really hungry. But during those three days I did not know what to do with my time; museums did not interest me—nothing, in fact, in the whole town. In 1942 I married a fellow architect, Gertrud Constanze von Meyenburg, because I was in love with her. She came of an upper-class family. My friends' suspicions that I was

marrying for money did not bother me. Her parents' house, a large country estate, combined manorial dignity with thrift. The bride had her dowry, according to custom: silver, furniture, linen to last a lifetime; I as bridegroom was responsible for the kitchen equipment. In addition, she was given a wedding in keeping with her family status (I wore tails for the first and last time in my life) and an advance on her share of the inheritance—120,000 francs, I believe. Whether I was entitled to draw on this I do not know; anyhow, I never did. Sums like that were not for me. My income at that time was quite good—enough to take care of the rent and the household expenses. My wife did in fact pay for a childrens' nurse out of her own account, but that, I felt, was what it was there for: a baby causes a lot of work. I should not forget to mention that, when I set up as an architect on my own, I was given two rooms rent-free in an old house belonging to an aunt. My father-in-law was also helpful. He understood that I wished to see my first play in print as well as produced in Zurich. Since Martin Hürlimann, who was my publisher then, would not risk printing it without a subsidy, my father-in-law offered to make me a present of the thousand francs needed. However, I was too proud; at that time I considered my play (NUN SINGEN SIE WIEDER) a significant work, worthy of being printed without a subsidy. Some years later, we went out one Sunday to the family estate to swim in the lake with the children. My parents-in-law were not there, so we asked the cook to give us a cold picnic, and we spent an enjoyable day. Afterward I received a letter from my father-in-law, a severe and earnest letter. This must not be allowed to happen again, he wrote, his house was not a hotel. It did not happen again. I do not consider this miserliness, but rather style. I have come across miserliness. A very rich art dealer (a European), whose guest I was for several days in Berkeley, showed the newcomer to America how to insert the necessary coin in the turnstile on the bus. Having watched and taken it to heart for all time, I thanked him, whereupon he asked me to

refund his coin—ONE DIME. I did not bring much into my first marriage: a couch, a throw for the couch, a typewriter, books, a second-hand writing desk, a smallish carpet, two drawing tables on trestles, a lamp, etc., and on top of that I was the guilty party when it came to a separation thirteen years later—to a division of the property. The complete edition of Goethe in soft leather binding belonged to her, I knew—it had been a gift from her father. But one volume of that edition, DICHTUNG UND WAHRHEIT, was present in duplicate, and I asked whether I might keep this separate volume. She was quite right, however: this separate volume did also belong to her. In retrospect I can understand why my father-in-law, when I wrote him the painful news that my marriage with his daughter had collapsed after twelve years, replied simply by asking me if I could afford a divorce. I was already forty-eight when I took driving lessons and bought my first car, a Volkswagen. For some years I kept no check on my expenditures: in Zurich I tended to save money, but not in Rome—abroad I find it easier to feel I am entitled to what I can pay for. For instance, an apartment in Parioli: rent, 2,000 francs per month. In the way I dress there has been no change. The only difference is that I do not need to watch my spending. So what do I need? It seems now as if money no longer plays a role in my life, none at all. Luckily there are colleagues who presumably have an even larger income than mine, some of them good writers. What I can now allow myself without hesitation is a very good pipe, or even two, as well as things that make life comfortable and save time, such as air flights instead of long railway journeys, taxis to the airport. In Rome we had a maid called Pina who had spent her whole life in the service of aristocrats. I could not bring myself to press the bell when we needed ice from the refrigerator in the next room; I preferred to get up and serve my guests myself. I shall never be an aristocrat. Once Heinrich Böll came to visit us. He was sweating and, while Pina was serving us, he took off his jacket. From that

moment we were finished for Pina. Passing through Zurich, I caught sight of a bank building, the Volksbank, and the building suddenly stirred a memory. I went into the hall, which seemed familiar, and, producing my passport, asked at the counter whether I did not have an account there. It was true: I had—20,000 francs, put aside at one time for fear of being unable at some future date to pay my monthly alimony. In the meantime the sum had increased to 23,000 francs. Thank you, I said. When, a quarter of an hour later, I saw another bank, the Sparkasse der Stadt Zürich, I went in and inquired there too. I was shown a savings book—174.30 francs, last withdrawal in 1938. Opposite it was the Kantonalbank, and so I also asked there, pushing my passport under the grille. A long time passed before the teller returned and said: No, unfortunately not. I apologized. How do I come to be rich? My expenses have multiplied and, whenever I happen to see the figures, I am horrified. To save myself a fright, I feel the urge from time to time to check whether I am not making a mistake about my income. And indeed I am: it is even bigger than I thought. Whole fortunes accumulate, and their size seems somehow arbitrary, more like a lottery than wages or a salary. If somebody in difficulties borrows a hundred francs from me, or even a thousand, I forget all about it. Inevitably attitudes get distorted in a mysterious way—not only toward other people who have to be careful with their money, but also, curiously, toward my own past: how ridiculous, I feel—of course I could have bought myself a motorcycle in 1955, when I was living in the country. I begin, not without a certain determination, to pamper myself. If I want a record player, why not the best on the market, and why not really first-class speakers for it? But at the same time I have to overcome something within myself—the early habit of thinking the cheaper article is quite good enough for me. In the company of friends I tend to be extravagant: newly rich rather than plain rich. I see no sign of envy in my friends, but something has changed. They talk less

frequently now about their financial worries. They know that I have already helped a few people. But above all it is my relationship with rich people that has changed, their attitude toward me. Suddenly they begin to talk uninhibitedly, not only about literature and the arts, but also about property prices and places in the world where one can get things particularly cheap—jewelry, antiques, and so on. Of course, I had always known what they possessed, and we had talked about Poliakoff, Cuno Amiet, Hodler, etc. (though not yet about Giacometti). But in earlier days they had tactfully refrained from talking about valuables, knowing that their guest was in no position to afford them. So, though I might have heard about a lion hunt in Africa or a yacht anchored in Palermo, I had never heard about the price of these things, and I had therefore come to believe that the rich are not concerned about money. I now realize that in fact being rich is for them a kind of profession, a mission in life, and no insignificant one: they are by no means free of care. They do not begrudge me my success, I feel, any more than they do Friedrich Dürrenmatt, who is said to have a splendid house in Neuenburg. I am told their daughters read me with tremendous enthusiasm. Of course, in their eyes I am not rich, but all the same I do drive a JAGUAR 420, and that brings us closer, they assume; never for a moment do they doubt that political outlooks change with money. How can a millionaire be a socialist, let alone an anti-capitalist? They see socialism as the ideology of the envious, and thus they find me unconvincing. What cause have I to be envious? As an impoverished writer, enjoying their hospitality, I got less on these people's nerves. One thing I have never understood in my own case: the idea of money as power. For me it has remained just a means of barter. But something is wrong here, and of course I know what it is. A younger friend, whom I much admire, does not ask me for a loan. All I know is that he does need a substantial loan, and I am in a position to give it to him—and without interest, for it is wrong that my

friend should have to work for me, when I am a rich man. But that is exactly what employees and workers whom I do not know are doing all the time; otherwise there would be no such thing as interest. That is what is wrong. A painter who likes his wine but has little luck in selling his paintings celebrated his sixtieth birthday, and I sent him sixty bottles of his favorite wine. He told me later that he had smashed or given away every one of them. I had been abroad, and so I could not attend the opening of his show, but I had not even bothered to write him a letter. Sixty bottles! Thrown at you by a millionaire in passing as if it were nothing. I can understand his rage. If I had not had money, I still might not have written him a letter; but that would not have hurt his feelings. Am I now making the same mistakes as W.? . . . I think of Ingeborg and her attitude toward money. A handful of banknotes, a FEE, made her as happy as a child, and then she would ask me what I wanted. Money was there to be used. And the way she spent it—not as a reward for work done, but as something from the privy purse of a duchess, if often an impoverished one. She was used to doing without things—money was just a matter of luck. Her money, my money, our money? One either had it or one hadn't, and when it didn't stretch she was amazed, as if the world had lost its senses. But she never complained. She did not even notice that radio stations, which were always after her, paid her much too little, and with an air of absent-mindedness she would sign publishing contracts that did the publishers little honor. She never calculated on others' being calculating. She bought shoes as if for a millipede. I don't know how she did it. I cannot remember her ever regretting money spent: a high rent, a handbag from Paris which was ruined on the beach. Money vanishes, whatever you do. If somebody whom she loved economized on himself, she considered that a slight to their love. Both of us really deserved a palace, large or small, but she was not indignant because it was somebody else who had it. To give her

presents was a joy: she radiated pleasure. She did not demand luxury, but when it was there she was equal to it. Her family background was lower-middle-class like my own, but she had liberated herself from it. Not through ideology, but by force of character. When she reckoned up her accounts, she reckoned with miracles. As with many women, the banknotes in her purse were usually crumpled, ready to be mislaid or turned into something nicer. For my fiftieth birthday she invited me to Greece.

WHITE HORSE:

The brown and gloomy bar in which Dylan Thomas drank himself to death, with large mirrors revealing that outside it is daylight, not sunny, but a hard and gray Sunday. Without the rumbling trucks: that is what makes it Sunday. He would have time to go down to the Hudson once more, but lets it be. Instead, he looks through his little pocket diary for 1974: May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December—so many empty days, the weekdays blank: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. Then he pays for the beer he has not finished—

TO WHAT AGE DO YOU WISH TO LIVE?

DO YOU LOVE ANYBODY?

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Somewhere he watches the fire brigade in action, a lot of shining red trucks, sirens, blue lights revolving; a fireman smashes in three windowpanes, and smoke pours out. Then he walks on. It is still Sunday, and it is raining fairly hard. He walks with his coat open, his hands in his trousers pockets. At each crossing the

same ceremony: WALK/DON'T WALK. He has forgotten that he wanted to buy some tobacco. Without any real desire to know where he is, he reads the street signs: CANAL STREET—he has walked farther than he realized. Here and there steam rises from a manhole, a sight he is familiar with: these whitish curls of steam. It is three in the afternoon, and Sunday. Here one can cross the empty streets wherever one wishes; the asphalt is full of holes. Somewhere he hears the clatter of a helicopter, which he cannot see, a hard clapping noise in the air; he sees the gray clouds passing over the roofs. Then silence again in a long street without a soul in sight, nothing but garbage cans, herds of garbage cans. He feels the rain on the back of his neck. He looks around him without stopping, as if he were heading somewhere: yellow pipes in the middle of the avenue, a building site with barriers and warning flags, steam rising up as if from the smokestack of a ship sunk in the asphalt. He feels some sense of enjoyment, though he does not know what he is enjoying. He can still feel the sand in his shoes. A sudden rumbling noise comes up through a grating. Usually it is just a musty smell that emerges from these gratings. SUBWAY. He does not use it; he feels no need of a destination. What he had in fact meant to do was to take an hour's rest in his hotel, but here he is walking, hands in pockets. The rain has meanwhile stopped. Just once he comes to a halt: a few youngsters with roller skates are playing ice hockey with a real puck, which does not slide along the pavement, but rolls. For a while he wishes he too had a stick in his hands. Then he walks on. He sees: more garbage cans of corrugated metal, and beside them whole stacks of black plastic sacks waiting for Monday, a shining black.

COUNTDOWN:

Forty-eight hours until take-off . . . Lynn does not expect him to change his plans, and he does not expect her to ask him to do so.

Their understanding is complete. In the evening Lynn comes to his hotel. His ticket is lying under the yellow lamp.

TELL ME!

he often says, as if a person could describe himself, and then he listens, really listens. Lynn does not quite believe that it is not a matter of indifference to him, that it is important for him—who Lynn was.

(Months later, in January 1975, I did not keep to our arrangement. It is true I did not dare telephone her, like a voice from the past. But then I found myself standing at the reception desk in her office, making it appear that I was there on business. LYNN IS NO LONGER WITH US. I said nothing. Dead? That's how it sounded. The black girl at the desk, seeing my dismay, did not take me to her successor. She just said: I LIKED HER VERY MUCH INDEED. A letter which reached me in Europe told me where she had been at this time. It was a long letter, scribbled on the deck of a ship. She was without a job; she wanted in any case to change her occupation, she wanted a child, she was playing a lot of ping-pong and at the moment was reading my book, which I had given her earlier. Apparently she was traveling alone, considering her future.)

It is not the correct button that Lynn is sewing on his dirty jacket: it is a button taken from his raincoat. Too dark, and also a bit too large: it will show. An English jacket, bought eleven years ago in the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich. He has not forgotten that: it was her discovery, the first time probably that she had advised him on buying his clothes. It already looks in need of another new lining. A jacket like this one (corduroy) is no longer to be found, not even in London. A jacket for a lifetime, dry-cleaned a hundred times over; it is getting shabby now, and

that is what makes one feel so much at home in it. On the right sleeve there is another button that stands out. It is meant to: a small button, much too small, and reddish in color. Who sewed on that button? Lynn has guessed it: YOUR WIFE? Even without this button he would not have forgotten her. This is Monday. Lynn's friends, a married couple she had invited on this, their last evening together, had left at midnight. It was the first time that he and Lynn had not eaten alone. That had been her wish, and it had gladdened him; a sign that she was not concealing him. When her friends rose to go, he too put on his jacket: without the button. The friends had understood: this was her last chance of carrying out her promise to equip his jacket with a button. After she had said YOUR WIFE, he felt the need to eulogize her silently, as Lynn sat there still working on his jacket. His discovery as he did so: that adjectives are of no use in eulogies. What emerges is just a catalogue: an attractive woman aged thirty-five, at present in Berlin where, as Lynn says YOU LOVE HER, it is now five o'clock in the morning. He meanwhile has said nothing, but has been loading crockery into the dishwasher. Her job done, she says with a laugh: YOUR DIRTY JACKET! It is four in the morning as he puts it on. Lynn has to get some sleep. She is already asleep when he pulls the front door of her apartment shut from the outside, as softly as possible. Out on the deserted avenue he enjoys the prospect of telling Lynn that he walked for a whole hour without being molested. It is no longer dark. Steam comes curling up from the shafts, through gratings in the asphalt. But, only ten minutes later, he is sitting in a yellow cab. NO SMOKING, so he does not know what to do with his hands. Their last night had not been melancholy; but his body had let him down. He tries talking to the Greek cabdriver, but ceases to listen when he suddenly realizes that he did not check her front door as he pulled it shut from the outside, to make sure that it really was locked and could not be opened with a turn of the handle. Theft, murder, anything might happen. He

must ring her up the moment he reaches the hotel; in his agitation nothing better occurs to him. Giving the driver a twenty-dollar bill, he does not wait for the change, but then whole minutes pass before the night porter at last appears, too sleepy to find the right key at once. He has to repeat the number three times—1112A (in reality 1113, but they shun the number 13 here). When at last he reaches his room, he does not telephone after all. Lynn needs her sleep. For a while he just sits, without taking off his jacket, and thinks about locks, while outside it gets gradually brighter; the water tanks on the roofs are now reflecting the first sunlight. Then he realizes he is no longer thinking at all, neither of yesterday nor of tomorrow, not even of today. But he is not sleeping. Through the open window he is seeing everything there is to be seen, the house front opposite. He is not tired —or else too tired to get into bed. No feelings; when he closes his eyes, he can see her sleeping face very close to him. His physical failure does not bother him when he happens to think of it. The house front opposite: brick, the windows with metal frames, some with curtains, blue or red or yellow, and all the windows have those boxes for air conditioning. In one bay window there is a leafy plant; a cat is lying on the sill. When one stands up, one sees more than just this house front: down below, the crossing, yellow in the light of the street lamps, and the roofs of the lower houses; here and there steam or smoke is rising up to the morning sky, a sign that the houses are lived in. The people are still asleep. Once the sound of a ship's siren: three blasts. One looks down into yards—shafts with gardens below. He forgets that he has turned on a bath, for it takes a long time to establish the connection, to hear a voice saying OPERATOR, and then the ringing tone at the other end. No reply. Lynn is dead, or she is asleep. He remembers the bath and turns off the tap, pulls out the plug, then goes out into the corridor to study how the locks work. The hotel bedrooms, pulled shut from the outside as he had pulled her door shut, cannot be opened without

a key. That comforts him. By a lucky accident he still happens to have his door key in his hand, so he can let himself back into his room. Then, still in his clothes, he lies down crossways on the bed—

Lynn's name will not become a synonym for guilt.

I should have to describe a stone table . . . The house in Berzona, which we view in streaming rain while passing through: a farmer's house, its walls rather dilapidated, the woodwork rotten in places. We have come from Rome, VIA MARGUTTA, from a rented apartment. Throughout my life I have always been a tenant or a sub-tenant. Now I want to own a house, with you. Beneath umbrellas we trudge through the neglected grounds, a jungle of nettles and brambles and ferns; as usual in this district, the terraces are supported by dry walls made of stones from the fields. You walk along, not saying much. I point out the fine walnut trees. The grounds are large, and they contain many chestnut trees. Inside the house it is stuffy: patches of mold on the walls. It is I who confidently maintain that it can be restored and extended, it is I who haggle obstinately about the price. One thing is clear to me from the very start: as a bachelor I could never live in this valley, all on my own. I know the beam from which I should be found swinging; from a little window it would be easy enough to reach. But now I am living with you—have been for the past three years; we have never yet spoken of marriage. The things about it I particularly like are the heavy roof of granite and the way it is all positioned on the slope, the house and a stone outbuilding which is almost a tower. The spatial relationship of the two buildings is something no architect could easily plan: it is unconsidered and perfect. I am full of enthusiasm. In spite of the rain. It is something I have never before even dreamed of, having a house of my own, and now I want it. But we shall still continue to travel. It is not

meant to be a prison, but just a home, if you are agreeable—our home. I am cautious about the purchase—and not only because the price is higher than expected. At Christmas, while you are staying with your mother, I go there again. In these valleys it can happen that one gets no sun at all during the winter, or only an hour at the most. I spend a whole day in the grounds by myself, on a fine winter's day without snow. Opposite, there is a high dome-shaped mountain, but the sun just clears its top, and the house gets six and a half hours of sunshine. Luck. Inside the house everything looks even more dilapidated than before, and I am glad you are not there. The last person to live in it was an old tenant farmer, not quite right in the head. But no smell lingers from the swill he is said to have cooked in the house for his three pigs. A moldy mattress, on the other hand, does stink, and so does a variety of junk that one must try to imagine out of the way. I take some measurements. The rooms are small, the walls thick, and one will not be able to knock out much of the stonework. All the same, I see ways of making it a place to be lived in. Outside, at a granite table of the sort usual in Ticino, I make some sketches. Back in Rome, I show you these, pointing out the snags, and you see I am keen. I have changed my living quarters too often. Here there would be room for a growing library—our library. This would be your workroom, with a door out to the garden. Here a room for guests. I consult a young architect who lives in the district and is prepared to do the conversion, and in 1964 I decide to buy. Our life in Rome: like a vacation, living from day to day, somewhat rootless, too casual to last. And it is not as if VALLE ONSERNONE is the other end of the world; you can study in Zurich, for instance, if you want to. Now and again we go to see how the protracted conversion job is getting on. For a while it looks insane: a ruin, the rotten floors torn out, only the heavy walls which support the roof remaining; outside, huge piles of rotting woodwork. Concrete must be used to hold it all together. One stumbles through a

forest of props. The conversion, carried out lovingly and carefully by the young architect, takes a full year. We go with him to choose tiles, fittings for the kitchen and the bathroom; the choice is yours. In the meantime you have got to know the ground plan, and you trust us, the young architect and the former architect together. You see my childlike joy in building, my masculine joy. A few things you cannot visualize as they will be—the staircase, for instance: all you see is a huge hole as you stand there nervously on the planks, I holding your hand. There are now many things to be chosen from catalogues. Technical matters interest you less: the size of the oil tank, the make of the oil burner and boiler, etc., but you are happy to leave these to us as you stand enjoying the blue autumn light over the grounds. The architect wants travertine for the fireplace, but you are against it; so, incidentally, am I—it is not a villa we are after. Lamps we also need, and that is always difficult. In earlier years my advice to builders was: in matters of taste the decision belongs to the one who is paying the bills. This time the decision is ours. Yours and mine. Some things fail to come up to expectations when they are completed: for example, the flooring in the living room—the small pattern was deceptive. But you know I am no Onassis, and so we leave it as it is—it is not all that important. On the other hand, you are delighted with the new floor in the little loggia—brick laid in herringbone-style as in Italian monasteries. The red Zurich tiles in the dining room are beginning to please you too, now that they are laid and will, as promised, grow darker with time. For you these little experiences are new, and you are happy. The house is your work also. We are agreed: all the inner walls should be white. As in Sperlonga. Before leaving Rome, 1965, we are invited to Jerusalem, and you enjoy that too. There is not much in Rome to be packed and loaded before we go: some crockery, three Roman lamps, a Tuscan table with five chairs, the books (only those we have collected in Rome—the others will come from a storeroom)

and some phonograph records (for use with a better record player) and your little working table (a poor antique, I know) and a rocking chair, pans, a chest (MILLE SETTE CENTO) and a few clothes, the Roman bed linen, and my typewriter. We are not a household, but two people together. When we move in, the builders are still there, a concrete-mixer as well. The steps leading down from the road to the village have not yet been built; one walks on slippery planks. In the outbuilding the intermediate floor, which formerly separated the pigs from the goats, has just been ripped out, my studio is still being built. The five construction workers, all Italians, cross the border daily, returning every evening to Novarra. They still have weeks of work before them. We are secretly glad of their company. The old foreman, you say, looks like a rustic Samuel Beckett. They bring their food in little rucksacks, and at lunchtime sit down at the stone table or outside on the grass: you heat up the soup they have brought in their tin cans, or you yourself make a soup for us all. I like that. I look after the beer and the wine. Not everything in a conversion job is contained in the plans; a wall, a floor of granite blocks, how it will look when completed—that depends on their good taste. We owe them a great deal. A fireplace in my studio is unnecessary, I think, though there is one there, and it has only to be put into better shape. However, I say: Let's not bother with it. The rustic Beckett objects. UN SCRITTORE, he observes, has a lot of paper to burn. I have to agree with him. BELLA CIAO, BELLA CIAO, the phonograph record we brought from Rome: its sounds pour through the open windows as they work. When it rains, they work in the cellar. The painter is also still in the house, though he sometimes disappears for a couple of hours to fish in the nearby streams. The wall of book shelves, built to my sketch, pleases you after all. You arrange our library while I prize open the nailed packing cases. Work is often slow, for you must sit down to read something that has caught your eye: all honor to the books. In the garden you lay out an herb bed. We

also plant three vines, whose leaves, nine years later, are now covering the pergola above the stone table . . . Why am I telling all this? Whom am I telling it to? One day two heavy packing cases are carried down from the road above. In the first, as expected, is the stove for the Finnish sauna bath. The other is full of stones for this stove: granite, of which there is already more than enough in this district. Another thing I install is a wine cellar. The hammering workmen do not disturb me as I sit at my typewriter. On the contrary, in fact: we are all at work. One day, however, they pack up their tools. You prepare a risotto and a roast. It has been a pleasant year here, they say. AUGURI. Hundreds of guests come, friends of yours, friends of mine. You are the hostess, and I feel you do it well, by which I mean the festive atmosphere is unforced and (to all appearances) effortless. There are frightening thunderstorms lasting thirty hours at a time, and in winter there is snow to be shoveled. I split logs and light fires in the living room, but I also do a lot of other things during these years. You do other things too. In the early morning hours I try my hand with a scythe or an ax in an effort to clear the jungle, later I borrow a power saw. We remain townspeople. The people of the village do not call you SIGNORA, since we are not married. They say MARIANNE or, when you are not there, LA MARIANNE—but never LA SIGNORINA. Once you decide you want sheep in the grounds—not just all those cats that have attached themselves to us. I have a fence built and buy four sheep, one of them black. When one sees them in the grounds, they are always facing in the same direction, all four of them: whatever they do, they all do exactly the same. Three are savaged to death by a marauding dog; the remaining one we give away. Gradually our summers in the country begin to look alike . . . I should have to describe the various dishes that you invented / your talent for getting on with people both old and young, who consequently enjoy visiting our house / our swims in the cold streams, when I uncork a bottle we have put

in the stream to cool: your cheerful presence / the pile of books (mainly German, but also English, French, Italian) on the floor beside your bed / your present-giving to all and sundry / your childlike excitement over approaching birthdays / how you, a grown woman, sit on a bicycle and immediately summon up a vision of girlhood days / your worktable, the clutter of heavy dictionaries and written pages and blank pages and literary avant-garde periodicals and postage stamps and answered letters and journals devoted to fashions you do not wear / your motherly solicitude for my work / your rain-washed leather Texan hat, when I spot it in a crowd in a railroad station, and places which without you are not the same: PRAGUE, WARSAW, AVIGNON, PARIS, LENINGRAD, ODESSA, VENICE, LONDON, JERUSALEM, MANHATTAN, etc., and the little stone table in Ticino—

THIS BOOK WAS WRITTEN IN GOOD FAITH, READER

and what does it keep concealed? And why?

FIFTH AVENUE

a woman in a long white dress and a white hat in the style of 1900: a madwoman. Her hands feel along the stone or metal of the house fronts as if she wants to assure herself that everything is still there. Hands like feelers. She cannot be blind, for at red lights she stops and waits. Most of the passers-by do not even notice her; she is walking more slowly than the others, but she blocks nobody's path as she walks along close to the house fronts. Where there is glass, it looks as if she is gently touching her reflection; she appears to be happy. Once I go past her so that, on some pretext, I can turn around and see her face. She is happy. At times she stops, as if suddenly finding herself in empty space, and then she goes back a few paces. Her fingers

hardly touch the objects, sometimes not at all; it looks as if she is just blessing them, thus acknowledging that they exist, the ugly objects as well. Does she even see the human beings? Her dress is comical, though intended as a ceremonial robe. Incidentally, she is barefoot, as I notice after a while. Now and again she speaks, at the same time making gestures of a vast concealed tenderness. It appears to be a special day for her, a day of fulfillment, a present moment.

Helen Wolff, my publisher, is on the whole satisfied with the press reaction. She is pleased with the flowers, my gesture of appreciation, which now stand in a vase on her desk. Greetings to Europe, to our mutual friends in Berlin, Uwe, Günter . . . Elsewhere I take my leave silently—of:

WASHINGTON SQUARE:

the old chess players at the stone tables beneath the green trees, already summery now.

SHERIDAN SQUARE:

the patina-covered statue of a man named Sheridan who is wearing two cooing pigeons on his hat.

BIGELOW:

the nimble breakfast-makers.

EIGHTH STREET:

the tobacconist who knows what I smoke and, when the weather is fine, always remarks cordially on it.

CHINESE LAUNDRY:

the Chinese owner, thin as a rake, who has managed after all to wash and iron my sweaty ping-pong shirt in time.

BALDUCCI'S:

the display of fine fruit.

TRATTORIA DA ALFREDO:

her friend, who is surprised to hear that this is my first visit to the little trattoria. Previously I had been begged never to enter this trattoria, and I had kept my promise. The openness between us, now possible, is nevertheless somewhat constrained. There are other things to talk about. It is true: the food in this trattoria is not expensive and it tastes good; the atmosphere Italian without fuss, the clientèle intellectuals, the owner Alfredo appreciative of people who speak Italian with him. Since they do not sell liquor here, we go on afterward to his apartment. It is not far: seven minutes on foot. He is now divorced, the apartment unchanged though recently repainted; the INGRES poster in the same place. When his new partner returns home, he looks at his watch: where has she been all this time? She is (so others had told me) a brilliant woman. She greets me with unconcealed curiosity, not entirely free of constraint, but with watchful eyes, as if comparing me with a police description. She is blond, her hair combed upward. I do not stay long; I still have a gift to buy, a BROWN CAMPAIGN HAT. Where can I find such a thing? They pretend to be joking with each other. It is three o'clock, she left the house at eleven. I say something or other—about West Berlin and East Berlin, I believe. He really wants to know where she has been since eleven o'clock. She laughs and shows what she has bought—not very much. Four hours for that? She

is interested in West Berlin and East Berlin. She knows Paris pretty well. She would be happy to make some coffee. His tone is still joking: when one rings her in the office, she is out shopping or has gone to the library, where one can't telephone her; and when one doesn't ring her in the office, she has been there the whole time. She laughs; he does not.

SWISS BANK CORPORATION:

my account there.

HOTEL LOBBY:

Mark and Inger, to whom I return the borrowed crockery and cutlery, with thanks and kisses on both cheeks, left and right.

SENATOR LOUNGE:

Toni Zwicker, my cheerful fellow countrywoman, who once more drives me to the airport, with kisses on both cheeks, right and left.

The time is coming, not only to think of death, but also to talk of it. Neither pompously nor facetiously. Not of death in general, but of my own death. I am, in relation to my age, fairly healthy. The doctor finds nothing wrong. Tiredness after too much alcohol, headaches when the weather is sultry, etc.—these are not illnesses. In spite of incautious living there are no signs of liver cirrhosis. Now and again slight twinges in the heart. These I have known for twenty years. No pain but—if I had to describe it to a doctor—a feeling of constriction, of weakness; a need for more air, but then breathing becomes difficult. I tell the doctor it is like a hand gripping the heart, a paw without claws, for it is hardly a pricking sensation. It goes away after two hours,

maybe only a quarter of an hour, and usually I am able to prevent people's noticing. When I am alone it is accompanied by fear, but not really the fear of dying. Lying down is very bad; sitting, it is the fear of rising from my chair—at such times I cannot imagine myself doing anything, such as crossing a street. Medical examinations from time to time always produce the same result: an ideal cardiogram. Medicines? The doctor's advice: drink a cognac. Kidneys in order, lungs in order. It would be better if I were to smoke less. Suspicions of cancer, which assail so many people at every cough or stomach-ache, do not afflict me. I have seldom been ill. I dream a lot about death. Even with no dream to remind me, I sometimes wake up in alarm: I am now sixty-one, sixty-two, sixty-three. As when one looks at one's watch and sees how late it is: What, already? Fear of old age is melancholy, but awareness of death is something different: one is aware even in times of happiness. Like everybody else I am afraid of an agonizing death. When I attempt before a journey to put my affairs in order, it is a considered act. I am now older than my father was at the time of his death, and I know that I shall soon have reached the age of average life expectancy. I do not wish to live to a very old age. Most of my time is spent among younger people; I see the differences in everything, even where they perhaps can see no differences at all, and there is much that cannot be explained; so, like them, I speak of my future work. Among other things, I know it is wrong to attempt to tie a younger woman to this lack of future which is mine.

The interview in that miserable newspaper has meanwhile appeared. Some of it is correct: the nationality, the number of children, a short man with spectacles, hobby ping-pong.

From the plane in the evening, after the time for loosening seat belts has arrived, one might have seen, to the left, a gray-

greenish-brown tongue of land with a lighthouse, yellow sand-banks separated from the mainland only by a frill of surf; on the right there is also sea, but open sea: like coarse felt to begin with, then hard like slate (quartzite) . . . On the final day I saw Lynn for the first time in her office, before that in the corridor, where I had to wait. She arrived looking cheerful. Her office is small, the view exciting. We had a little while to wait before it was twelve o'clock; Lynn on the window seat: not much Undine about her now, her manner very American (whatever that may mean) and weekdayish. The door to her office was left open; when a colleague looked in, Lynn introduced me to her. She asked me to autograph a book and, when that was done, we could go. LUNCHTIME. The elevator was packed, and somebody started to speak to Lynn, who is less sunburned than I. Her answer was apparently witty, though I understood little. I went by myself through the swinging doors and waited outside. When she did not come, I acted in accordance with the arrangement we had made for such an eventuality: I walked on to the restaurant alone and waited for her in the bar. Apparently a maneuver was needed to get rid of the person; it was twenty minutes before Lynn came. A French restaurant, rows of tables for two—no place for intimate conversations, and on the whole we were glad. After we had ordered, she gave me a present. I unwrapped it: a tobacco pouch exactly like the pouch of mine which Lynn had once fingered and which had got lost somewhere during our weekend, inscribed with my initials. VERY NICE, I said, BUT UNFAIR, for Lynn had forbidden me to give her anything, except for my OLIVETTI LETTERA 32, which she could make use of. TODAY I HAVE GOT MY PERIOD, she said. I still had some packing to do in the hotel, though not much; so I had plenty of time. Lynn herself had only a little time—one hour exactly. She suggested a walk in the UNITED NATIONS park, which was not far away. We walked quite briskly. I AM GOING TO MISS YOU, she said, raising her eyebrows like somebody forced to admit

an error. She said it beneath a traffic light, when almost with the same breath she could say COME ON, COME ON. It was my first visit to this park. A glaring noonday light, all but unbearable without sunglasses. The water glittered. In the park were a lot of people, looking as if they were enjoying the summer sun. But in fact it was shining so harshly that one could not really think or feel anything. The water was not blue, but black, with a shine on it as of quicksilver. We leaned against the railing. Even the gulls dazzled one's eyes. It wasn't that we had drunk too much: one gets a similar effect in the mountains: the white snow, the rocks by contrast almost black, and when one looks up: a noon night without stars. It was not hot: a keen wind was blowing from the water. Black barges, and in front of these barges glistening foam. Beyond them white smoke from a high chimney. A light as if a foehn wind were blowing—the glittering was not only on the water, the leaves of the trees were glittering too. When people entered their shade, they seemed to vanish. The glass house fronts reflected the silhouettes of the house fronts opposite, the mirrored architectural shapes somewhat distorted. We were not silent, but I cannot remember what we said. The zinc balustrade on which we were resting our elbows glittered like mica. In the sky a plane was flashing. Then Lynn looked at her watch. We still had a little time, but not enough to do anything with. We had seated ourselves on a stone ramp, where other couples were also sitting; above us the gleaming metal of a thousand window frames. Wherever one looked: this light, glittering or gleaming. She was pleased that I was pleased with the tobacco pouch; exactly right, its dark leather soft to the touch. We did not talk regretfully of my impending departure. We just looked: at the gulls, at the black barges and the foam they were pushing in front of them. Lynn glanced at her watch, I lifted my arm from her shoulders. We had risen to our feet to kiss. More lightly than now, as we went down a dazzling flight of steps, it would be impossible to walk. All we still had to do was to find the exact

place to part, and to keep an eye on the traffic. We joined hands when we had to cross over the avenue and ran. FIRST AVENUE / 46TH STREET—this was obviously the place. We said: BYE, without a kiss, then a second time, with raised hand: HI. After a few steps I went back to the corner and saw her, her walking figure. She did not turn around, she came to a halt, and it was quite a while before she was able to cross the street.